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North American Review

UNIVERSITY OF TULSA
APR 10 1974

"I was forced to watch while my friend was tortured to death by the white rats who seized his laboratory . . ."

THE DOLPHIN PAPERS

Edited by John Rodman

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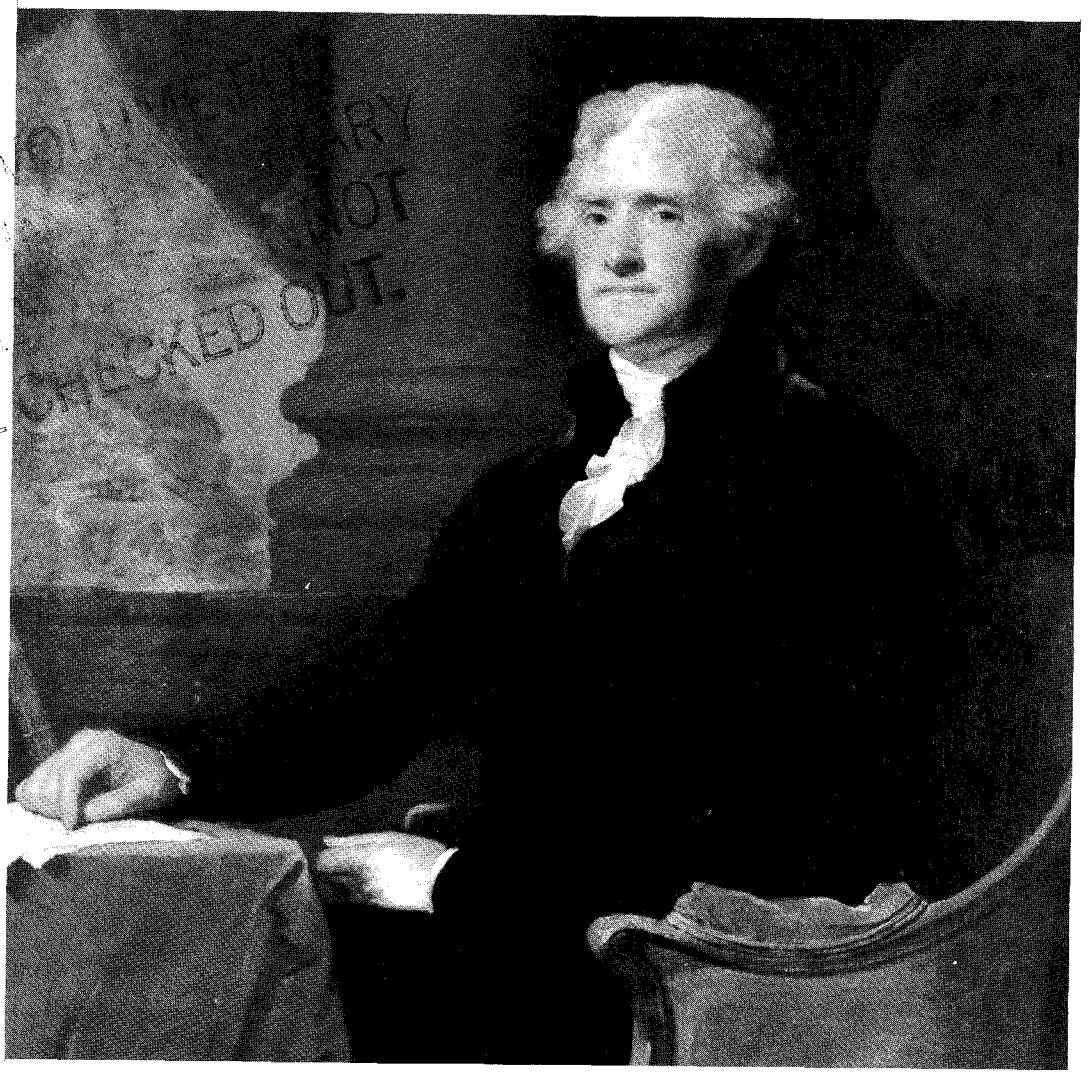
What Sort of Man Reads The North American Review?



THIS VOLUME MAY NOT BE CHECKED OUT.

Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. American review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to receive it from you and this letter presented to Col. Bernard Peyton of Richmond (my correspt) will ensure your receiving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have received N°. 46. but not N°. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to receive. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th: J.

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OUNDED IN 1815
/ol. 259/No. 1/Spring 1974

The North American Review

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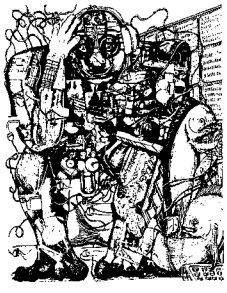
ABOUT THIS ISSUE



Forced to answer the question: What gives you the most pleasure in this issue?, we are obliged to offer more answers than one. Certainly we are delighted with *The Dolphin Papers*, the product of serious research on the part of Pitzer College's (Claremont) political scientist John Rodman; their appearance here is the culmination of months of failed communication—unwritten letters, unplaced phone calls, all the fault of the NAR's editor—and monumental patience on the side of the author, who has been waiting more than a year to let the larger world know how closely we have been studied by better mammals than ourselves.

We continue to be fond of our fiction. Much fuss is made over East Coast magazines for their so-called "new writing," but the new writing always turns out to be the work of the same old writers; what pleases us is that our writers are often as new as their writing. True, we've published earlier stories by Andre Dubus, and Stephen Minot is a regular contributor—but the other stories are by men and women new to our pages and, we hope, a revelation to our readers. Besides that, two of the stories in this issue are really novella-length, and where else can you read a good short novel these days at these prices?

And let us introduce a new NAR feature, Another Man's Poison, written by contributing editor Ken Lash. The column will be regular and eclectic; the author is a sometimes acerbic friend whose recent contemplations of the American art scene have appeared in *Arts in Society* and *Leonardo*.

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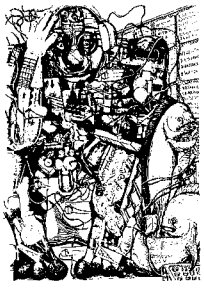

Notes on Living and Dying

Faces of Where We Have Been . . .

The first place, where it begins, in the coulee country around the wyhee River in southeastern Ore-on. The River and the Owyhee lountains and the rattlesnake-in-sted canyon are named for an ex-loring party of Hawaiians who went ıto the mountains in 1819 and never ıme out. It's Basque country now, ut a place that escaped inclusion in *National Geographic* story on merica's Basques. You don't go ıere unless you are, say, driving om Boise, Idaho, to Winnemucca, levada. Or the other way around.

The first night out is cold and dry, ry enough to make your cheeks ght. In the light of a full moon I e Herefords standing stiff, asleep elow me down in a basin. It is still ıough to hear them coughing a little. find a bowl in the face of the hill nd curl up there in my sleeping bag. I think you can hear the sun rise ı the winter. It's not like hearing ıe heat coming at you across the esert in Africa, like a wave; it is naller than that. You hear only an haling, as though someone had een holding his breath, waiting for deer to step into a clearing.

When I throw back the top of the eeping bag I shatter a patina of ice, ody moisture condensed and frozen. he Herefords are creaking awake; ıeir bodies steam and their breath illows against the razor of light of ıe rising sun. The barbed wire tapled to the juniper posts that keeps he cattle in the basin is cold enough nd tight enough to carry the pings f my bare fingernails down into the rozen floor of the canyon.

Down the road, near a small white abin behind a red cafe, there is a ıan with a gun. He is standing near his porch which rests flat on the bare ground and under the only few trees around for miles. In front of the cabin is a battered four-wheel drive pickup with a yellow snowmobile in the bed. He watches me walk over. He hunts the coyote. He is not interested in discussing the issue; this is sheep country, he says. There are seven coyote pelts stretched out to dry on racks around the cabin. They are fine pelts. A black and tan hound gnaws on a frozen hip bone and bobs his head and pinches his tail when I stop to watch him.

I come up the front side of the Owyhees and ride the ridge over into Idaho. It is snowing a little and the sun is gone and the cold sits down hard. On the rim of a basin I brush the snow from a rock and look through my field glasses for deer. Somehow you know these things; it is only a matter of spending a little time looking. There are nine of them in an aspen thicket at the bottom. They are all the movement there is in the basin. It is impossible to hear mice burrowing under the snow; it would take the sharpest of eyes to find the white-tailed jackrabbit, but the deer are here, like history. I wonder why they are feeding down so low. If I were up here with a gun I think it would be like having them at the end of a box canyon: no escape. In a split second it is clear to me why they are there: you can see from the pattern of melting that it is warmer down there. The trees, unlike the ones up on the slopes, are not sheathed with ice. There is flowing water in the thready creek. I wonder why I assume the deer have made a mistake in being below me, in being so vulnerable. It is the point of view a predator would take. It is only a little thing I tell myself, but it is good to be aware of it. I have no gun.

I continue to watch the deer through the field glasses. They pull down the twigs of alder and break them off. I remember reading that the mule deer will eat mistletoe and he will eat poison ivy too. This sets him apart a little in my mind. The deer jostle each other. Once in a while one of them looks out through the trees for a moment—and then goes back in to feed. They seem to be waiting for someone, pivoting the petals of their ears, as though some small part of the brain sensed something vague and untoward. Munching twigs, wet black noses, tap of a cleated hoof on a stone in the duff. Henry Beston wrote in *The Outermost House*, "They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations . . ."

* * *

The light is breaking through a little and the way it flashes on the sagebrush it threatens a rainbow. North of Magic Reservoir I stop for lunch and watch the light, diffused and flattened by the cover of clouds, fall across the islands and gravel bars of Camas Creek. It breaks across the red-tinged flush of willow thickets and the carpet of yellow willow leaves and shines on the white bark of the bare aspen. It glints on the patches of snow, the icy crust around the rocks in the creek. Beneath my feet, deep down in the porous volcanic soil, water seeps, drips south toward Thousand Springs. This water, they say, begins its journey 100 miles to the northeast, where the Little and

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the Big Lost Rivers disappear in a sink. Down below this, far below the seep water of lost rivers, miles down in the bowels of the earth, at the interface between the earth's crust and its mantle, is the scar tissue of volcanism. Up here on the edge of an icy creek you squat on your haunches and in silence you sift cold cinders; you stick your fingers into the creek until you can't feel them anymore.

Eighteen inches of snow lie on the ground at Craters of the Moon National Monument, training ground for Apollo astronauts. They used to say this place was "just like the surface of the moon." After Apollo 11 landed they added "when seen through a telescope."

The loop drive winds out through the black and white hills of aa and pahoehoe lava, beneath escarpments, past dark cinder cones and bellies out in craters. Signs are obscured by drifting snow; bitterbrush and rabbit brush poke from cracks; gnarled, tenacious limber pines with roots like wire suck water from rock. In the summer the angular, conical hills will be carpeted with a purple mat of monkey flowers and dotted with the yellow and pink blooms of dwarf buckwheat. There will be hundreds of other flowers in this place of seeming desolation. It is always that way; in the desolate places you have to look harder.

On the way out I pass the Devil's Orchard. It is always assumed that a place of upheaval is the work of the Devil. I begin to develop a theory about such names and their banal application across the geophysical face of America. For every Jump-Off-Joe Creek there are 50 Lost Creeks; for every Deathball Mountain and Poker Jim Ridge there are a hundred Old Baldies. What the Modoc called The Burned Out Heart of Lao we call Crater Lake; what the Cheyenne called the River of the Geese we call the Platte; what the Crow called Rotten Sun Dance Lodge River we call Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone.

Across Western America lies a hodgepodge lexicon of the imagination and the five senses, left by the miner, the cowboy, the Chinese laborer, the logger, the outlaw, and the maverick. As those names replaced many of the Indian names, so they were in turn changed and modified under the influence of more civilized surveyors, bureaucrats, patriotic merchants and missionaries. Today the old still fights the new as the overzealous seek to correct spellings and eliminate the profane.

It is not a bad mix of names at all, even if a torn place in the earth is always the work of the Devil, but we do not let the names of places grow out of them; we paste names on to things. They are arbitrary names and we do it with a compulsion. Something in the mind rebels when Boy Scout Cave is just over the hill from Blue Dragon flow; it works against a wholeness. We sound like a people who cannot leave anything alone and whose names come out of books.

* * *

Northeast of Craters of the Moon the road drops into Arco, Idaho, an atomic powered city, the first. In the fading light of a winter afternoon the yellowed fluorescent light from a cafe, the silence of the grey town and the empty space that hangs over the deserted sidewalks and streets (someone disappears into an alley) reminds you of Edward Hopper's *The Nighthawks*. Dogs stand still, listening at the corner. A car starts up at the curb and drives slowly away. Although you know the details are not possible, you retain a memory of the people in the cafe where you eat: their skin is pale and without pores; their eyes are black and large; they move across the floor in a drift, almost without walking, and they have small mouths and tiny teeth. It is an erroneous memory, but it won't quit the mind. Like the dripping somewhere of radioactive wastes.

* * *

From Victor, Idaho, in the morning I can see a storm ranging over the backside of the Tetons and the gold storm light of the rising sun reflects on a field of late wheat. There is comfort in this pattern of light that carried me from Oregon and will finally disappear in the Wind River Range in Wyoming: the mixture of red and yellow in the willows in the creek beds; the white of the snow in patches against the grass; grass turning a hundred shades of brown, gold and ochre; clear grey ice riming speckled granite boulders in creeks running low; the white of winter aspen and the grey of cottonwood against the cold blues and greys of the sky. They seem somehow as reliable a guide to the route east as the road markers announcing U.S. 20 and 26.

In Jackson Hole I visit with old friends. We talk about the years since we have seen each other and about the mild winter. The storm breaks up over the mountains and the sun sparkles on new snow. They say so many people are climbing Grand Teton now that it is impossible to be alone at the summit at any time during the summer. When I worked in this valley as a boy it was something to say you had climbed the Grand. Now it means a little less. Soon, they say, it will mean nothing.

At Togwotee Pass the sun is blasting through like a trumpet from a cloudless sky and there are sharp squeaks as I thrust my boots against the packed snow. It has been a long time since I've walked in snow where my boots chirped and I run and slide and enjoy it. There is no one around but the country for as far as you can see is laced with the tracks of snowmobiles.

I drive south on the Wind River through Crowheart across to Shoshoni and on to Casper, at the northern edge of the Laramie Mountains. North of Casper the land is flat creased with dry canyons and broken by buttes. Around the Teapot Dome and north on the Salt Creek Flats the land is so rich with oil that 1150 of 2460 wells are still pumping. Since 1908.

Outside the oil riggers' town of Midwest, ice-lined Salt Creek runs underneath a section of the highway. In the setting sun rainbows of petroleum contamination glimmer in the water and the crud of civilization bulks and foams along the edges. The sound of truck tires whining over the bridge reverberates in the little draw.

In Midwest where the oilmen live the houses stand like great low cells

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n a scant cover of thin, winter-beaten rees. There are no spots of color, no ed scooters fallen over on the side-valks. There are no sidewalks. A ence of ten-foot sections of three-quarter inch pipe painted white inks the grim grey houses together n rigid squares; the squares are ridded out in rectangles between rick-hard dirt roads called Watson nd Fitzhugh and Peake. There are lotheslines instead of washing ma-hines and three-year old Fords and hevies pulled up tight next to the ipe fences. Across the highway in he town of Edgerton there are a few tores and a handful of different ouses, but the streets there too are f pounded earth and iron tools aked with oil stick up in the weeds n vacant lots.

This desolate place of grasshopper umps clanking in the night and of hildren with dustbowl faces was first et aside in 1915 as an oil field for he Navy. In 1929 Albert B. Fall, Warren G. Harding's Secretary of he Interior, was fined $100,000 and entenced to one year in prison for easing the fields without competitive idding to Harry F. Sinclair. Forty years later Sinclair oil was acquired y Atlantic Richfield. Atlantic Rich-field—now called Arco—together with Humble Oil—now incorporated nto Exxon—holds the North Slope leases in Alaska. It was in Arco, Idaho, that the navy developed its first atomic reactor and there on December 20, 1951, where the first fast breeder reactor lit four 200-watt bulbs. In Midwest, Wyoming, regular gas still costs as much as it does anywhere else and there are nine road-stained pumps at the main intersection, spread out on a dark concrete apron where the trucks can get at them too. The boy pumping the gas says he's going down to Casper tonight and get drunk.

I go back to Casper and the wind smacks at my truck because the wind can really flash across the Wyoming prairie. It twirls funnels of dry snowflakes on the concrete road. For no reason at all I am reminded of antelope racing across the prairie, bounding flick of white butts over a hill and strung up in a barbed wire fence. They won't go over them. They try to go under them. Or through them. Once there were forty million prong-horn antelope.

Jackrabbits slash across the road. Coyotes trot over a ridge. At Lusk, Wyoming, the West becomes the Mid-west with changes in the line of the horizon, the lean of a building, the presence, oddly, of trees. The cowboy boots and hats will continue to Illi-nois, but the West is now behind.

Outside of Lusk I slam into a jack-rabbit. It is the largest animal I have ever hit and it saddens me that we could not have avoided each other. I take him by the ears and carry him off into the sage and lay him down. I sit there for a while. He has eyes like a fish.

The headlights pick up a damp spot in the road when I leave. It is only a small thing, but it is good not to forget it.

* * *

At the Nebraska border the sign posting the speed limits is a jumble of six sets of figures. It is incompre-hensible at 50 mph. It becomes ap-parent as I am made more aware of the imposition of order, as the land-oriented roads of the West give way to the property-oriented roads of the Midwest, that I can no longer feel safe pulling off to the side of the road and rolling out my sleeping bag. The national forests are way behind. Here you might have to field questions.

I pass Fort Robinson at night, where Crazy Horse was tricked into a building and killed, stabbed in the back by a guard. It was here too that Captain Henry W. Wessels locked up more than a hundred Cheyenne men, women, and children in a building with no food and no water and no wood for heat in the middle of the iron-hard winter of 1878-9. For five days. So they would come around and see things his way. They say that now on the winter nights when there is only a sliver of a moon, the ghost of Crazy Horse stands near where he was killed, wrapped up in his blanket so you cannot see his face. They say that on nights when the partridge freezes to death in the brush and lies there like a rock and the wind blows a little you can hear the death songs of the Cheyenne.

At five the next morning I sip coffee and eat eggs and toast and bacon in a little cafe in a knot of farmers in Chadron. They wear rub-ber boots and two pairs of pants, long grey underwear and thin hats with visors. Their ears are red and the stubble on their cheeks pepper and their voices are raspy from too many years of too many cigarettes. They talk about meat and grain prices and how a man has to figure his way through a break-even year. Two of them are listening to a salesman with a wide tie and sideburns earn-estly countermanding charges made against nitrate fertilizer and pesticide build-up in Nebraska soil. The two farmers stare into the space over the table and suck on Pall Malls. The salesman declines the proffered pack without missing a stroke in his talk.

North of Chadron, into South Dakota, is the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The Oglala Sioux, the people of Crazy Horse, live here. They have the worst of everything. The median family income is $1910. The main cause of death is suicide. Almost 60% of the men are without steady employment. Seventy per cent of the homes have no water or elec-tricity. The Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs rules with the autonomy of a colonial occupa-tion force; and the old Indians, some of them, have mastered the ways of dignified beggary.

For a while I walk slowly around in the snow at Wounded Knee. The snow is wind-crusted and my lead foot balances for a moment before it takes the weight of my body and breaks through. I try to remember if I learned anything in high school about the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee and Washita and Sand Creek, or the times the Indian won on the Bozeman Trail, the Fet-terman massacre, Little Big Horn and White Bird Canyon, or even the time the Indians and the Mormons got together and killed 118 Christians at Mountain Meadows, Utah. I don't be-lieve anything was ever said, except that Custer died fighting for his country at the Little Big Horn.

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At Wounded Knee is a museum run by a white man. Inside it was still a little torn up from a group of Indians who broke in and slashed fundamentalist Baptist paintings to ribbons, flung the photographs of smiling white anthropologists wearing Sioux war bonnets against the wall, and went away with the few things they thought belonged to Crazy Horse. The white owner says he doesn't understand why Indians have to make trouble for themselves.

Over the rolling plains of South Dakota into Rosebud Reservation and the Brulé Sioux country of Spotted Tail. One day many years ago Spotted Tail strutted back and forth on his horse in front of the blazing cavalry guns saying they could not kill him, his medicine was too strong. When they quit firing he shook the bullets from his shirt and rode away. Or so they say. In the summer of 1881 Spotted Tail was ambushed and assassinated apparently because he wouldn't go along with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Today on the Rosebud Reservation you can play golf at the Spotted Tail Golf Course.

The reservation ends at the western bank of the Missouri River. It is late in the afternoon and there is a fine clear light over the land; there is still a little green in the hills and giant squares of dull maroon where fields of sorghum grow; lines of thin brown grass in the borrow pits at the side of the road pick up the silver sheen of light and the sky arcs blue and cloudless to the horizon. In that light the water in the Missouri looks blue too. I watch it for a while—it seems untouched, as though it still beckoned explorers to climb on its back and run with it. That is of course impossible; you would be trapped on the lakes between the dams on the river. At least you can still find the bald eagle here. All the threads have not been broken.

On into Iowa and it gets cold again with the night. The headlights of the truck pick up the yellow Dekalb corn signs and signs for Nixon Feed on fence posts. Billboards advertise chemicals for crops. Gas stations offer shotgun shells with ten gallons of gas. Towns boast brick buildings and the air is loaded with the odor of fertilizer and things man-grown. The roads are littered with tractor- implement droppings, the hay is rolled in the fields as well as baled and along with signs for Kiwanis are signs for 4H and Future Farmers of America. Cottonwood and poplar shelter houses from the wind and the city limits no longer post the elevation. The up and down of the West is now the back and forth of the Midwest.

The next day in Illinois I visit with friends. It gets warmer as I move into Indiana and the next day into Kentucky and I have to begin paying to drive on the roads. The towns get closer together and there are more stop signs, cross roads, traffic lights; the air becomes more opaque. It is now impossible to cook dinner by the side of the road without feeling like an aberration. One morning in Tennessee the sun is just coming up and it lights the fog on the creeks and makes the cream-white Charolais cattle stand out against the thick green fields. There is a profusion of trees, some few still holding their leaves. They are not big trees, but all same-size second growth. Still they are fine looking. I begin thinking how ridiculous it is to set the glaciers of Mount Rainier against these hardwoods. But I know people who do and laugh at Tennessee. It is like saying a beaver is better than a fox.

* * *

One night in Georgia I am awakened by a barking dog. He barks off and on for an hour. I think to myself I would like to shoot him. A while later I hear a shot and I do not hear the dog anymore that night. Perhaps the dog only ran away. That day I had counted 16 dead dogs along 30 miles of two lane road. Everywhere in the South there are dead dogs by the side of the road, worse than pheasants in the Dakotas or rabbits in the West.

* * *

The day before the last Apollo, Apollo 17, is scheduled to go, I arrive in Coco Beach and get my press pass and go with a press group to Cape Kennedy and launch complex 39. The Cape is alive with wildlife: pelican and wild hogs, rattlers and deer, ar madillos and alligators. The Cape i sheltered from the mainland by th Merritt Island National Wildlife Re uge, established by NASA, and som suggest it was done to keep peopl from getting too close, a rumo NASA, with no sense of humo denies.

The NASA tour leader is describ ing a time after a hurricane when h was out here and the roads, the onl land above water, were covered wit cottonmouths and rattlesnakes. H says if we watch closely we'll see all gators in the sloughs along the roa No one is paying much attention t him; they are anxious to see th "bird." That night we are taken t within three-quarters of a mile of th rocket to photograph it, lit up b searchlights to a daytime brilliance bright white against the blue-blac sky. The area we stand in is bordere by thick grass and there are sign which say: Do Not Enter. Area In fested With Poisonous Snakes. N one pays any attention. They wad through the grass with their camer equipment down to the lake wher 300 people will take the same rocket reflecting-in-the-water photograp from almost exactly the same angle

The next night when it goes it i like the venting of a volcano and th second rising of the sun. Three mile away the earth shudders and th noise, the hammering pulse of crack ling fire, almost hurts the ear. It rise slowly on a shaft of yellow flame ou of reach of the searchlights whos beams are eclipsed in the torchligh of the Saturn V. Later I will see i rerun on a color television; it wil bear only a passing resemblance t what I have witnessed.

* * *

The next day in Everglades National Park is cold and very few people are there. I am surprised by how much it looks like a prairie, the open oceans of saw grass so wide you can almost see the curve of the earth in them. I am surprised by how close you can get to the birds—especially to the anhingas—how close you can get to the alligators. Swamps of spat-

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terdock under which the gallinule hunt for snails; trees that smell like skunk spray and a tree that gives you a rash like poison ivy; air plants nestled in the crook of a bay tree; the bay tree choked by a strangler fig. It is all impenetrable. It is the last stronghold of the eastern panther, a refuge for the manatee, the crocodile, and the loggerhead turtle. Fire has swept the grass country; hurricanes have torn into the mangrove swamps. In the past the country has repaired itself. All it required was the flow of water from Lake Okeechobee to the north. The story of the dams and dikes and canals that have cut the water off is an old story, and I would not be the first to pass on the feeling that the Everglades will be the first national park to die, after a short life of only 30 or 40 years.

In a restaurant at Cape Sable I sit and watch the birds. I have been here for only two days, and the birds have become the cornerstone of my perception. I have been watching them, the roseate spoonbill and the herons and egrets and pelicans and anhingas, fishing, hiding in the mangroves, drying their wings, looking over their shoulders, soaring. I have watched the pelican glide impossibly close to the water for hundreds of feet; in the high winds off the cape I have been watching the turkey vultures stumble through the air like drunkards; in one day I have seen 14 osprey; I have seen the great white heron, *Ardea accidentalis*, the only bird Audubon ever discovered and named.

It was here, near Cape Sable, on July 8, 1905, that Guy Bradley was killed by poachers, at a place called Oyster Bay. It was largely out of that incident that the now massive effort to save America's wildlife was born.

* * *

The last day I spent in the glades was like the others, cold and overcast. I was sitting alone on the beach at Cape Sable waiting for the sunset. I was at the midpoint of a long turn around the country, a stretching of the imagination, a getting out of the Oregon woods to see and touch things. I would be off to Key West later, then on to Louisiana and Texas, New Mexico and Arizona before going home again. I had not come on this journey to find anything at all but the corners of the country that I had forgotten about while living in Oregon. I had spent days talking to people and looking at the roll of hills and smelling trees and watching animals poking after tracks in the snow. I had examined kitchen utensils in the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois, and seen bits of the moon on display in Huntsville, Alabama. I had watched a snowbird, the junco, puff and puff his feathers out against the cold until he was like a ball in the snow on the plains in Nebraska; and watched a man make oak splits in Kentucky. My nose remembered the smell of burning sagebrush and the punk of wet woods.

There was nothing special about any of it. Sitting here in the sand I felt no compulsion to make sense of it, to suture it all together to make it have a point. I was happy for the time to relearn things: how to listen so well that you do not feel compelled to answer; how something that happens in a place is always there afterward if you are not impatient with seeking it out, so you can still hear the Kentucky rifle in the woods of Tennessee; how man is capable of the most magnificent testimonies, in and out of concert with his environment.

* * *

And I remember this: I was talking to a Sioux in South Dakota. It was not a serious conversation about white injustice; it was a talk like two human beings have. We were talking about the old people and he said that when I grew old my face would not know what to do; when he grew old his face would look like the land he had grown up on, the Badlands of the Dakotas. He'd borrowed the line from someone, who'd borrowed it from someone else, but it made no difference. It was a good thought. It was a small thing that bore thinking on. We would all die with the faces of where we had been. The land does not tell lies; but the city is a chameleon—and we are the sons and daughters of both. Our hearts soar a little with eagles and, too, with the things we have made out of the stuff of our minds.

—*Barry Lopez*

. . . And of Where We Are Going

Just how does a nurse learn to care for a dying patient? How does she learn to cope with this most awesome phase of life? How can she resolve her feelings about death so she can function at the side of a dying patient and give him the support he needs? It is through a process of change—a kind of metamorphosis.

In the beginnings of her professional work the nurse has to feel her way along, digesting and assimilating experiences and storing them as reference for future crises. These early experiences are painful as she learns the mechanics of death. She must learn to touch a dead body without loathing on her face. She learns the look of the dead, the purpleness of lividity, the waxen face and glazed eyes and the final coldness of the body as rigor mortis sets in. She learns to prepare the body for the undertaker, bathing it, removing tubes and drains, cleaning up excretions and closing the eyes and propping the jaw for a hundred times or more, it seems. She learns to swallow twice and set her jaw; to get on with what must be done and, occasionally, hold back the tears.

She must get used to the actual moment of death. There is something unreal and overwhelming about the actual instant—unreal because the

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patient looks the same; surely, if we only work harder there will be a heartbeat a g a i n—overwhelming to realize that something has gone. Call it what you will—soul, life force, energy—it is not there now. You wonder where it has gone. Could it be still in this room? Does it know the team is still here working to get it back, and does it laugh at all the feverish effort?

The first death I saw was a middle-aged man in the throes of a massive coronary. He lay on the bed with blood pressure cuffs on arms and legs to act as tourniquets. These were supposed to keep the injured heart from having to pump so hard. The man was fighting. He didn't want to die and cries of fear and pain came out of him in short grunts. He threw himself back and forth in the bed in spite of our efforts to quiet him and he tore at the bedclothes. His sweat drenched the bed and made his skin clammy and repulsive to touch. His wife had insisted on staying in the room and was standing toward the head of the bed quietly crying. This was all before the days of monitors and defibrillators and my memories are those of frantic activity, and drugs injected and a sudden awful stillness. I can still hear the wife's wail as the doctor said, "That's it."

The nurse learns the different ways of meeting death. She sees the aged worn-out body welcome it. She sees the pain-riddled cancer patient sigh and accept it. She watches the middle-aged coronary fight and deny it. She sees the child cut down and feels anger such as she has never known before. From this anger is very likely to come a furious talk with God in the nearest utility room—a talk which would probably shock her minister. For the first time her past religious training may seem inadequate.

She learns how to cope with relatives: to lead the terrified children out to the waiting room, the dumbfounded wife to an out-of-the-way chair. After it is all over, she offers coffee, and it seems to her that the coffee she pours is like pouring balm on their open, bleeding grief.

She learns the standard phrases to fall back on. "Thank God his suffering is over." "She's at peace now." "We did everything that could be done for him." "He's with God now." She learns many, many ways to avoid the word *death:* The relatives and friends are told that the patient has passed on, slipped away, slept his life away, gone to his rest, found release, left us; anything to avoid that absolute and final, "He's dead." She finds that no matter what she says to the family it will sound silly and stupid later on.

During this early mechanical period of learning the nurse has little chance to reflect on what death means to her. She is too busy trying to steel her senses against the final act; too busy trying to develop coping mechanisms. She may turn suddenly very religious, reading the Bible and cornering the chaplain with profound questions which seem to make him uncomfortable. She may even turn to a different religion than the one she grew up with, upsetting her parents greatly. She may become afraid and depressed and ignore the dying patient as much as possible. She has found out by now that to care for a patient is to become involved and, finally, to be hurt when the patient is lost. She may find a lot to do in the utility room when the dying patient's light goes on.

Sometimes she may find a kind of sick humor in death. Ludicrous things can happen when death occurs and sometimes the staff find themselves leaving the room to avoid a fit of the giggles.

I called the gruff old doctor in to pronounce the patient dead. There was still a trace of heartbeat and we stood listening to the chest and waiting for the last one. After it came, the doctor turned to the wife and said, "Well, Mother, he's gone." At this the old man gasped and began to breathe. Dumbfounded, we waited, listening and counting the pulse until it again faded out. Again the doctor turned to the wife with "Well, Mother, he's gone." And again the patient gasped and began to breathe. Twice more we repeated this cycle and twice more the old man roused. By now the whole thing was utterly ridiculous to us and only our compassion for the wife kept us sober faced. At last the heart kept still and we were sure that he was finally dead. When we could leave the room, our sick humor overwhelmed us and we were weak with laughter.

* * *

Soon the nurse will encounter a death which will make her stop and force her to examine how she really feels about what will happen at her own death. Perhaps it will be the death of a loved one, a parent, a sibling or dear friend. Perhaps it is a stranger with whom she feels strong identification by reason of age and size and background. When this happens the thought creeps in: "This could be me," and she is faced with her own mortality. There are ways open to contend with this impermanence. She sets about learning to talk with the dying and looks for ways to really communicate with them. It is a bungling process at first. She finds the old trite phrases empty in the face of deep grief and anger. She tries to look despair in the face and listen to what the patient has to say about his own encounter with it. She reads and reads on the subject, and shares experiences with other nurses. If she is lucky, she may have someone who is close to her teach her to deal with death and take the sting out of it.

Aunt Mary did not marry until she was over fifty. She took care of her mother through three strokes, marrying only after Gramma was bedridden. She and Frank were very happy. She changed from a prudish old maid to an outgoing person not afraid to show her feelings. We loved her dearly and she made all the nieces and nephews her own children. She and Frank were due to move into a brand new home after Gramma died, when Frank himself dropped over with a heart attack. We all grieved with her and watched with pride as she gritted her teeth and started a new life. The next year she discovered

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a lump in her breast and, sure enough, it was cancer.

For four years after surgery she was fine; doing the things she'd wanted to do, touring Europe, visiting relatives and friends, and coming and going as she pleased. Then the cancer spread to the lungs and the long death began. There was more surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, and finally the word that there was nothing more to do. She began to set her affairs in order. She closed her house, called her brothers and sisters, and came to live out her days with us. Her one specific wish was that she not die in a hospital.

At first we did not talk of the cancer. She was still up and about. As the weakening came she began to talk of her possessions locked up in her house. She called me in one day and said it was time to talk about her death and where things were to go. I cried and she comforted me. I was not to feel this way, she said. After all, she had lived a full life and it would make her feel so much better if she knew her possessions would be given to the right ones. These conversations took place daily and finally we were able to laugh together as we imagined giving inappropriate gifts to inappropriate people.

* * *

Learning to cope with death is to learn what is really important to oneself. Seeing the world through dying eyes gives a different perspective. Committee work, new clothes, coffee klatches and shag carpeting seem pale beside the laughter of one's children, a husband's pat, a soft snowfall, a red sunset and all the other things which make one's being sing.

Aunt Mary died in the early morning, exactly nine years to the day after her husband. She taught me much about dying and all of us in the family felt fortunate to be a part of that death. It was almost as if we had taken part in a great ceremony or celebration. By her response to death, she lessened the terror for us all.

—Charlotte Bolton

The
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TWO BITS OF GOOD NEWS

A Monetary Note:

A number of university literary quarterlies have recently increased both their cover prices and subscription rates—a circumstance which creates an odd dilemma for the NAR. If other magazines have raised their single copy price to two dollars, and their annual subscription to seven or eight dollars, won't our University raise its administrative eyebrow if we fail to imitate them? Probably. Still, it is our studied opinion that a buck-fifty is as much as a reader should have to pay for any magazine on this side of pornography, and six dollars is plenty for something that comes around only once every three months. Besides, there's some evidence that charging more for a literary quarterly is counter-productive. So: Good news; same high quality, same low price—at least for the year ahead.

A Promise of Things Coming:

In future NARs, fiction by Raymond Federman, Peter Saenger, Judith Lavinsky, Jeannette Bertles, Martin Wampler, Peter Corodimas, Mary Peterson; non-fiction by Leo Hertzel, Sigmund Kvaløy, Joseph Meeker; a host of new poets, and the usual regular departments.

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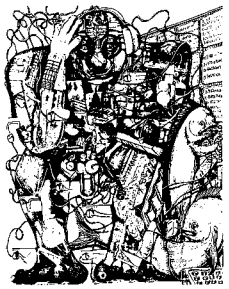

Kenneth Lash

Good, Evil, & Some Prices Paid

Back in college when I was interested in evil, it came to me with a twinge of disenchantment that evil was finally ignorance. Flesh-and-bone ignorance. The Bible does not prepare one for such insights. Classical mythology does better, though it was confusing to note that Zeus, high in everything but brow, called his wisdom feminine. Anyway, I've been frightened by ignorance and bored by evil ever since. This severely limits my opportunities for entertainment. It even cuts me off from friends, who are not really amused when I tell them that I wish Fellini and Bergman (Ingmar) would get married and make love instead of grotesque movies about ignorance. Reading the newspaper has become perilous; having it beamed at me by TV renders me, I am convinced, impotent. Ignorance is an impotence; evil is the backfired force of that impotence rattling around in the world. It's beginning to tear moorings loose in a way marvelously unforeseen even a few years ago.

Things had seemed to be proceeding rather peacefully toward their end: the democracies getting weaker, the totalitarians getting stronger, nuclear substances leaking slowly underground on their silent mission. China reopened, Peron restored, France obstructing everything with its adorable logic. The United States blundering into peace. Britain defying prosperity. Russia staging The Great Wheat Raid. "Made in Japan" becoming one of the last marks of quality. It was all going along as right as any expert in ignorance could have unwished. Then suddenly —POOF—Watergate! A supreme achievement in ignorance. Entirely absorbing. The whole world instantly falling into two sides (2 is the human number; despite mathematicians it is arrived at thus: —1 +1 = 2). Was Watergate evil or just lovable folly? (When evil is "human" it is "folly.") Absolutely absorbing. A nadir. Everybody poring over it as if it were a developing book of Saul Steinberg cartoons (as I once found, in better days, the entire Education Ministry of Brazil poring over).

Suddenly into the midst of this progress come the Arabs, riding brave limousines and waving holy bombs. They are not a twentieth century people but, as seems only fair, they awoke one day from a deep dream of something or other to find that, by doing nothing other than to sit where they have always sat, they suddenly owned half the oil blood of the twentieth century, plus a few gadzillion bucks of American monopoly money. Well, you can't buy a different history, so they decided to buy back the one they had, using as symbol a piece of Biblical real estate. Symbols, of course, have been used very intelligently in the forward march of ignorance, and the Arabs now began so to use them. Money cannot buy history, but can make it; and oil can do more than money can —it can stop it. Actually stop twentieth century history. People began to huddle and feel cold. It was snowing in Europe and Japan and in the United States. In the capitals the bickering began, and the plans. And somehow another mooring had torn loose. No pun intended. No pun intended at all. But here's one: the holy cost.

Money buys the greatest technology. The greatest technology is the greatest power. Immediately. You don't have to understand it, just ask the salesman where the button is. Ah, just think: to blackmail the entire planet! It is a thought worthy of a god. Or at the very least, of a prophet.

Lordy, lordy, Mr. Yeats, what rough beast indeed, its hour come round at last, slouches toward Bethlehem to be fooled?

* * *

It was an incredible spectacle to watch a country that had already named a candidate Tricky Dick to go on and elect him President . . . and then attempt a refusal to know what he was doing . . . to blame the media for telling . . . and after it was forced past gritted teeth like crunchy granola, to watch them try to swallow it. They wouldn't. They spat it out. "All politicians are bums!" they yelled, thus preserving the Know-Nothing tradition that runs like a vein of sludge through the United States, from its universities to its gas stations.

A refusal to look at cause means an abandonment of responsibility for effect. The effects are now descending. "Fix it!" we yell. At whom? Who is going to fix it? I've got mine, you've got yours — that's what we've wanted to know, that's what we voted for. What do we know about fixing it? — about people, or forces, or emotions that put things back together? A colleague of mine, for example, suggested locking up the executives of the oil companies and the teamsters union in the same room for thirty days. "They'd solve some energy problems or die," he said. He's a real Know-Nothing. They'd come out of that room together ready to rule the world.

Simone Weil defined power as that

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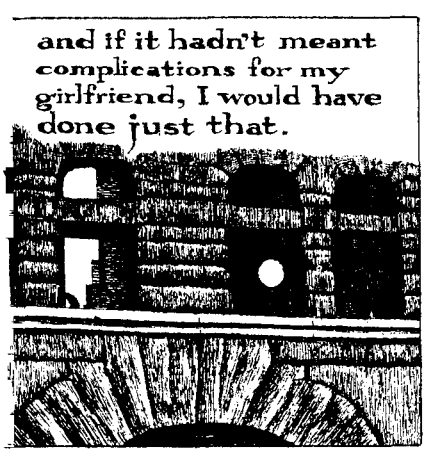
force which can turn a person into a thing. I've never found a better definition . . . nor seen it more clearly at work and in play than now, when some people some of the time engage the many in what may be a last battle against settling into thing-ness.

* * *

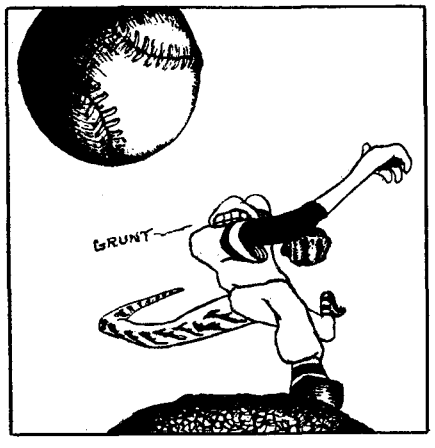
A friend of mine dreamed that he was in therapy with a psychoanalyst, that he was standing up and talking, facing the door. When he turned around to ask the doctor a question, he found that he was facing the head of his internist, and that this head was poked out at him through a hole in the wall, like a dodge-'em game at a carnival. My friend didn't at the time, though, think *carnival*—he thought *confession*. "Like a confessional," he said. Altogether a nice visual pun, don't you think? Mr. Fellini? Mr. Bergman?

* * *

Five or eight years ago, when the hippies decided that the world was a comic book and themselves the new leading characters, they struck a blow for self-esteem by proclaiming the comic book an art form. Their product adapted Rabelais' energies of excess garlicked with de Sade's necrophilic obscenity. The result was quite marvelously disgusting. It was like leafing through the walls of men's rooms. But the drawing was better; in fact, it was often very good, having the vigor of conviction. (*Zap* Comics, for example.) The text was adapted from the great bible of TV —most particularly vengeance, rape, and pillar-of-salt chapters. The "Mysteries." The result was a hero fantasy parodied, the parody becoming in turn another fantasy. The anti-hero as antidote. But it was all pretty rubbery, and finally became simply a form of the media it satirized, serving much the same media purpose for its particular audience as Mannix did for its depressives. And yet there were moments, and reminders, and those older squares who were tuned into *Peanuts* numbered among them some who remembered *Krazy Kat*. They remembered that the comic strip could indeed be an art form, mysterious behind its outrageous immediacy.



And along comes Bill Bergeron. (*Prairie State Blues*, Chicago Review Press.) His drawing is that of an older craftsman—whether it's of a



farmhouse, a freight train in the moonlight, or a fox in uniform throwing a screwball. His ear for candid dialogue is that of a modern bug. The power of his work is not the combination of the two, but the way he combines them. Words and drawing rarely illustrate each other. They reinforce by going off at tangents, all the way to absolute non-relationship and back, not in any abc order but in a kind of rhythm as poetic and insistent as free-form dance. Though sometimes brutally funny, the effect is overwhelmingly melancholic, like hearing eternal banalities of a murderous sportsfan circling around a lonely, deserted farmhouse. The objects, the landscapes that Bergeron draws with such pains, survive the words but are gutted by them, desecrated, made instant ruins. It is a world somewhere along the track between Eliot's *Wasteland* and *The Last Picture Show*. In some sequences, with the words taken verbatim from newspaper clips, a plague is raging and nobody knows it; in others, populated by animals, a plague is raging and everybody's yelling, "I want my share!" But finally, long after the message has passed, there are those drawings, those weirdly shifting discontinuities. It is a comic book worth seeing. Bring your own humor.

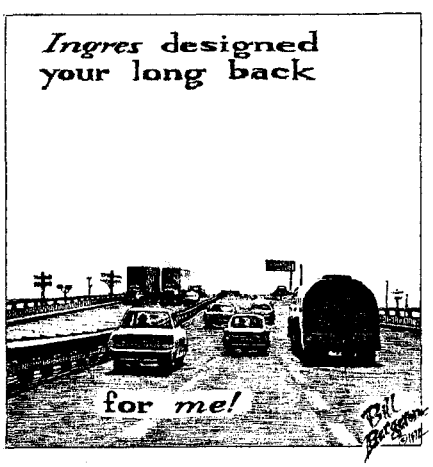
* * *

Last summer I got around to reading Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*. It was a borrowed copy, and I wanted one of my own, so this fall I went to the bookstore looking for one. They had it in paperback. Cramped, confined, big yet shrunken, like a dehydrated elephant. I said no and ordered the hard cover, with a dignity of print worthy of the words. It cost ten dollars.

The look of the paperback led me to a prophecy (or maybe it was consorting with a Russian that did it): Remember when paperbacks were 50¢ and hard covers $2 or $3? I foresee that in five years compact cars will cost what Cadillacs do. I am proud to offer this as the least important prophesy of the year.

* * *

Psychiatrists tell us that our energy stores depend upon our sense of well-being. Technologists tell us that our well-being depends upon our energy stores. Most of my friends are still quite comfortably tired. □



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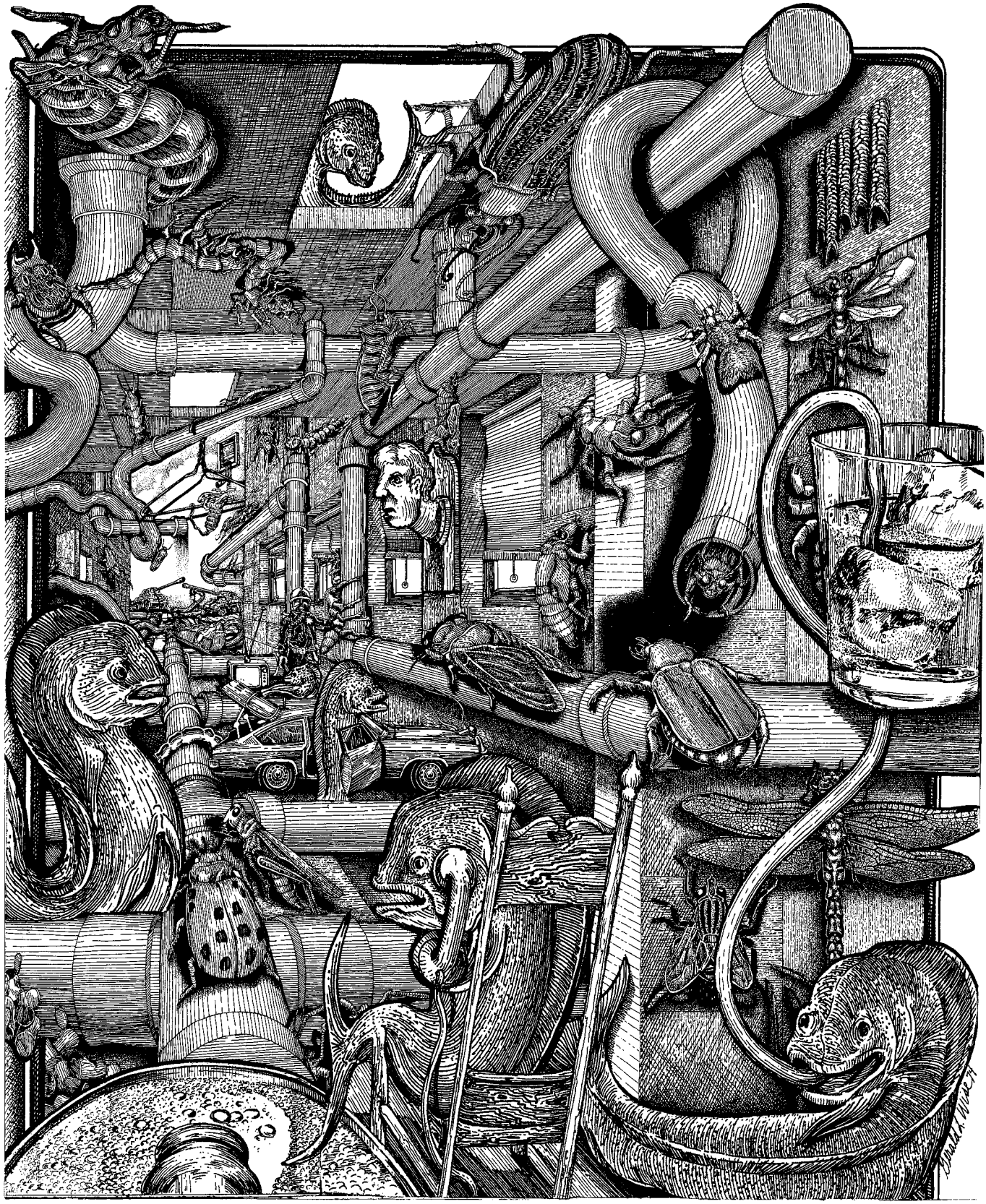

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THE DOLPHIN PAPERS

Edited and introduced by John Rodman

I am convinced that these papers, which I have the privilege and the duty to make public, comprise one of the most extraordinary documents in the history of thought. Whatever their value as works of scholarship and argumentation (this will surely be debated), they are of interest for their unique perspective—especially in the aftermath of the recent Revolt of the Beasts.

The "Dolphin Papers" consist of typescripts found in the Cetacean Section of the now-defunct Institute for Interspecies Communication (a research affiliate of the Center for Pacific Studies at the University of Hawaii) by intelligence officers following the occupation of the Institute by the U.S. Navy in December 1970. The condition of the papers is imperfect: some pages are missing from numbered sequences, while others are partially burned or water-damaged (perhaps as a result of the shelling of the Institute during the process of pacification). The papers remain classified "Top Secret" by the Department of Defense, but recently a copy of them came to my attention, and I resolved to begin publishing those portions of the text that I could reconstruct with reasonable accuracy.[1]

In publishing the papers, I am motivated both by the scholar's desire that the truth should be known, and by the citizen's faith that knowledge will enable us to act with greater prudence so as to avoid a recurrence of the late, unfortunate, and still somewhat mysterious rebellion. While I take no responsibility for the validity of individual statements in the papers, or for the overall viewpoint, I feel strongly that we need to understand the state of mind—the "philosophy", so to speak—of those who may have masterminded the uprising.

We do not yet know with certainty whether the papers are a human translation of the discourse of one or more dolphins, or whether they are a human fabrication. From the Institute's grants, contracts and publications, we know that the staff was testing the intelligence of bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) *by teaching them to understand English and to perform such simple tasks as carrying and positioning underseas explosive devices. The papers were found in a double-locked filing cabinet along with numerous tapes containing long series of dolphin sounds (fast and slow clicks, whistles, barks, wails, humanoid sounds, and sounds at ultrasonic frequency). There is no hard evidence that communication was achieved beyond the level of simple commands—the sort understood by well-trained domestic dogs or by the dolphins that perform tricks at Sea World and Marineland—but perhaps we do not know everything that went on at the Institute. Of the 37 staff members, 26 were killed, most of them by the shelling, ten are missing, and one is hospitalized as an acutely paranoid schizophrenic who refuses to speak and who suffers from the delusion that he is listening to messages others cannot hear.*

If we assume that the Dolphin Papers are a human translation of dolphin dictation, the implications are enormous. Not only can dolphins think and communicate, but the papers could have been dictated only by very learned dolphins—learned in the history of Western thought, no less. How this could have come about, we can only speculate. Since dolphins depend as much on their hearing as we do on our sight, our author(s) would doubtless have learned aurally. This presupposes that at least one dolphin had been able to understand human speech for some time, and had either held converse with human scholars or been able to listen to distant speech. (Should we imagine our author(s) auditing university lectures in the history of Western thought while sporting in the tank at the Institute or basking at sea?)

What could have been the purpose of dictating the Dolphin Papers? We might suppose that the more scholarly portion (Section III) was originally composed as part of a larger effort to understand human culture in aspects particularly related to dolphin interests, and to communicate that understanding to other dolphins (perhaps also to other intelligent species), either as an exercise in satisfying curiosity or as part of a campaign of conscious-

1 An earlier version was presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, April 5-7, 1973, San Diego, California.

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ness-raising. The more militant portions (Sections I and II), on the other hand, would appear to be more on the order of political propaganda designed to crystallize and focus grievances and, by implication, to mobilize for action (though they stop short of outright incitement). The mood and style are sufficiently varied that we may assume that the papers are not necessarily the work of a single intelligence.

What could have been the purpose of having the papers translated into a human language, specifically English? Were dolphins beginning to reach out to selected humans (and were we the chosen people?), seeking to win allies by discoursing with us in terms of our own intellectual traditions? This possibility makes sense in light of the papers' curious statement that, at a special stage of history, certain individual humans will break through to a transhuman, truly philosophical consciousness of the whole and, in consequence (non sequitur?), *desert the human camp and join the dolphins. Is it possible that some staff members of the Institute, funded to humanize dolphins, became "converted" to the dolphin cause? Did they, out of misanthropy and/or misguided compassion for the subhuman, commit the mistake typified by Romain Gary's Morel, who took his rifle into the African jungle to defend elephants against the human predator?*[2]

Granted that such a theory can explain the facts, it also makes great demands on our credulity. I, for one, find it more plausible to assume that the Dolphin Papers were composed by one or more human beings, presumably members of the Institute's staff who, out of disgust with their own species and/or sympathy with the dolphins, "invented" the dolphin cause. There is, after all, a literary tradition of the animal fable, from Plutarch through Fontaine to the contemporary comic strip. Moreover, the hypothesis of human composition fits easily with received knowledge about the intellectual and empathetic capacities of human beings, while not requiring us to make far-fetched assumptions about the powers of nonhumans. On the other hand, we are left with the problem of how to explain the recent Revolt of the Beasts. But it is surely as plausible to suspect sheer coincidence, or a well-contrived plot by certain human beings who trained and manipulated the hapless rebels, as it is to suspect that different animal species conspired among themselves, even under the leadership of dolphins.

In either case, the practical lesson seems to me to be the same. If we want to avoid future rebellions, we should adopt policies that will pacify the bestial interest, whether it is the beasts themselves or their human "friends" that are mainly in question. As Pascal said of God, what is there to lose if we wager that He exists? We only have to change our lives.

Lest I be misunderstood, I wish to make it absolutely clear that I have little sympathy with revolutionary violence, and that I retain unshaken my faith in the genetic superiority of the human race. This faith I regard as firmly grounded, not only in revelation, but also in the philosophical analysis of the concept of man and in the analysis of what we mean when we use the terms "man" and "beast" in ordinary language. It is also supported by the most respectable empirical research on animal behavior in laboratories and zoos (that is, under controlled conditions). If certain recent "discoveries" have seemed to make the traditional distinction between human nature and bestiality seem problematic, as our anonymous author suggests, it should be remembered that these were not studies carried out in controlled conditions in accordance with the approved experimental methods of scientific research. In any case, I am confident that a satisfactory reformulation of the man/beast distinction can be achieved, even if it is only in terms of differences of degree with respect to a "family" of loosely related characteristics (e.g., intelligence, consciousness, communication, tool-making, tool-using, social organization). Differences of degree should never be underestimated; sometimes they are all we have.

But while our natural superiority justifies our rule over the beasts, we owe it to ourselves that our rule should be as enlightened, as generous, and as humane as possible, given the fact that we must eat meat, hunt, protect our crops from predation, and pursue the vocation to which we are called as rational beings, namely, "the enlarging of the bounds of human empire" (Bacon)—the conquest of ignorance, scarcity, and nature through science and technology. I state categorically that the legitimacy of "man's dominion" justifies neither genocide nor gratuitous cruelty. If nothing else, we cannot predict which species will prove to be of use to future scientific inquiry; and it is undeniable that well-treated beasts work more efficiently, make better laboratory animals, serve as more loyal and affectionate pets, and provide better therapists.[3]

It is thus the responsibility of us all to take steps to bring about that more enlightened and humane rule that will at least ameliorate the causes of discontent. The horrors of the recent rebellion still throb in my memory. I saw gentle, loving, contented animals, even beloved pets, turn suddenly into savage beasts. I was forced to watch helplessly while my friend and colleague, the late René Immanuel, Nobel laureate in experimental psychology and a distinguished Christian layman, was brutally tortured to death by white rats who seized control of his laboratory. I shall never forget the horror till my dying day. I hope that the publication of these papers will alert my fellow men to the need for removing some of the underlying causes of the discontents that lurk beneath the surface of our civilization.—J. R.

2 Romain Gary, *The Roots of Heaven* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1958). Note the coincidence that full-grown elephants and the larger types of dolphins have larger brains (in absolute size) than does *homo sapiens*. (See John C. Lilly, *The Mind of the Dolphin: A Nonhuman Intelligence*, Avon Books, New York, 1969.)

3 On the usefulness of animal pets as psychotherapists, see Boris M. Levinson, M.D., *Pet-Oriented Child Psychotherapy* (Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1969).

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I. Theses on "the political"

I. The ultimate political struggle is for control of the definition of "the political."

2. Party no. 1 (Aristotle, Locke, & Co.): "the political" is a special type of human activity, relationship, association (e.g., political authority as distinct from "brute force", the master-slave relationship, parental authority). Party no. 2 (Max Weber & Co.): "the political" refers to the affairs of that territorially defined, general-purpose control organization monopolizing "legitimate force" and known variously as *polis*, empire, commonwealth, or state. Party no. 3 (contemporary radical social critics): "the political" comprises every conceivable form of power, wherever it is found.

3. For the idealists of Party no. 1, "the political" is a relationship involving some degree of equality, rationality, consent, participation (e.g., the citizen is a person who rules and is ruled in turn . . . and ruling is seen to occur by persuasion). This means that many states (absolute monarchies, despotisms, tyrannies, dictatorships, etc.) are condemned as non-political. If consistent, the idealist student of politics would not concern himself with most of the governments known to human history.

4. By focusing on "the political" narrowly defined, both the idealists of Party no. 1 and the "realists" of Party no. 2 shift attention away from the other forms of control that exist within every organized society. "Political activity" narrowly defined is the activity of an elite and an abstraction from the total system of social control. The Athenian "democracy" presupposed a slave economy, a patriarchal household, and a strong web of religious custom, which were not the proper concern of the student of "politics". What was the *polis*, then? Rousseau, who longed to restore the political life of the ancient "republic", confessed frankly his willingness to have slaves if it were necessary in order to have citizens. Tocqueville saw that weak government was possible in 19th century America because of strong religious/moral social controls, but American political scientists have, on the whole, left the study of social controls to sociologists. "Political science" has become thereby an abstraction functioning as an ideology of social domination.

5. When distinctions have become firmly established, the pointing out of identities and parallels appears as metaphor. Western man lives today in the disintegration of Liberal ideology, but short of the final disruption: old distinctions are still assumed but disbelieved—church *vs.* state, government *vs.* economy, public *vs.* private—and subversive metaphors are rife: "the politics of sex", "the politics of the family", "the politics of housework", "the politics of orgasm", "the politics of experience", "the politics of therapy", "the politics of ecstasy", "the politics of science", "the politics of religion", "the politics of the psyche", "the politics of the classroom", *et cetera*. Who is "top dog"? How do social roles get defined? What is the process by which a society defines "schizophrenia" and thereby deprives people of liberty? Who defines what is professionally acceptable in the contemporary guilds? Who determines which "trips" can legally be taken? Who gets the grants, the contracts, the grades,

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the goodies—how, when, where? Will the despotic superego succeed in putting down the massive revolt of the oppressed id? What role will politic ego play in the new balance of power? Politics is suddenly seen to be everything, everywhere.

6. The history of politics is the story of the struggle of successive groups to gain control and to legitimize their control.

7. Every regime, even if it claims the direct, revealed mandate of the Deity Himself, ultimately legitimizes itself in terms of a conception of the nature of things. Some men are by nature rational and therefore deserve to rule, while others are natural slaves (Aristotle). That is the basic model of all political justification; only substitute male/female, noble/base, industrious/lazy, elect/damned, rich/poor, educated/ignorant, old/young, white/black, Aryan/Semitic, stronger/weaker, civilized/primitive, progressive/backward, *et cetera.*

8. New groups making claim to political power challenge the established notion of "nature" as mere "convention". There are really no essential differences, no differences "in nature", between nobles and commoners, men and women, rich and poor, whites and blacks. There is only accident of birth, force of circumstance, and bias of regime. In the long run, the Sophists will probably win: no man is a natural slave, not even a certified lunatic (R. D. Laing).

9: But the Sophists had their own conception of "nature" just one level below the version they were challenging. The species "man", human nature in general, was presupposed as an essential unity underlying variations of culture, class, and role. Protagoras proclaimed it: Man is the measure of all things. Modern reformers from Mary Wollstonecraft through Karl Marx to Black Power spokesmen have echoed it in their complaint that society treats women, workers, or blacks as "animals".

10. The only really revolutionary stance is that "nature" is the greatest convention of all. Perhaps there are no natures, no essences—only categories and paradigms that human beings mentally and politically impose on the flux of experience in order to produce illusions of certainty, definiteness, distinction, hierarchy. Apparently, human beings do not like a Heraclitan world; they want fixed points of reference in order not to fall into vertigo, nausea. Perhaps the idea of nature or essence is man's ultimate grasp for eternity. The full impact of the theory of evolution (the mutability of species—including man) is thus still to come.

11. The distinction between Human and Nonhuman (Man and "Nature"), *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich,* Subject and Object, is certainly the second great convention. On it is founded man's sense of identity and superiority, as well as his conception of the moral and the political. (Fichte gives the show away: the *Ich* "posits" (projects?) the *Nicht-Ich* in order to feel, by contrast, its own subjectivity, infinity, power. Insensibility, death, thinghood thus originate in man and are unloaded onto the environment.) Rights and duties apply only to human "subjects" (Kant); everything else is an "object" to be used. Other animals than man may be sociable, may communicate, may live in organized societies, may defend a territory, may perform social rituals, may employ a division of labor, may engage in "mutual aid", may have rulers, subjects, and rebels; but they do not have moral or political life. By definition. Men know from the inside that men reason, consciously choose, engage in intentional action; they know from the outside that the other animals have no inside! In favor of behavioralism is at least an aspiration to consistency.

12. If the man/beast dichotomy could be transcended think of the possibilities for a genuine science of comparative politics! Both human and non-human societies exhibit a wide range of patterns with regard to specific variables such as territoriality, dominance, degree of cohesion, degree of "mutual aid" *vs.* competitiveness, degree of pacificness, *et cetera.* Some non-human societies, like some human ones, are relatively loose and anarchic; others are organized more strictly under the dominance of a leader or a ruling group. Some consist of individuals or families holding private property; others have little or no private property, but the group will collectively defend its "country". It is time for ethologists to stop talking about "territoriality" in general and to develop a differentiated typology. It is time for political scientists and sociologists to stop beginning (and stopping) with the man/beast dichotomy, and to look at the concrete behavior of all *animal* societies. It is time for an end to *anthropology.*

13. The distinction between Man and Beast is at bottom a political rather than a scientific distinction. It is ultimately an act of domination rather than of knowledge: or, rather, it is an act of knowledge-as-domination, the imposition upon the complexity of experience of a rigid dichotomy that authoritatively assigns roles but cannot be scientifically defended. One after another, the old formulations (intelligence, communication, tool-making, tool-using, social organization, and so on) have been brought into question by observant naturalists, but most men have stubbornly clung to their traditional faith in themselves as a master race.

14. The freest human political system rests upon a broad base of despotism and slavery. Slogans with universal potential ("freedom", "equality", "justice") stop at a frontier that claims the authority of nature and of science but increasingly looks like a political boundary. What will be the outcome? Can politics be corrected by progressive scientific enlightenment? Can science itself be trusted? Must a political policy be reversed by political action? What is to be done?

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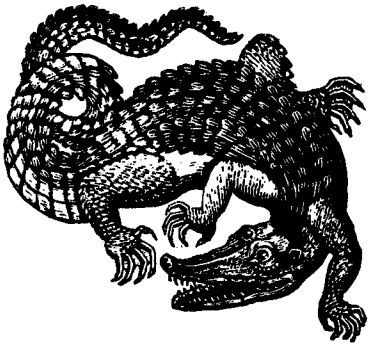
II. Fear of the Beast



A spectre is haunting Western man. The Red Menace and the Nuclear Menace have given way to Fear of the Beast. The nightmares of modern men, like their wish-fulfillments, are recorded on film, projected onto screens, and ritually experienced as thrilling, harmless spectacles.

Human beings have probably always projected their self-fear and self-hatred onto beasts. For centuries, at least, they have represented their own rapacious potential in legends of men who turn into ferocious wolves and vampire bats. But the contemporary horror film has moved in only a few decades from exploiting the folklore of traditional society (the Wolfman, Count Dracula, the Cat People), through invoking the invasion of strange beast-monsters from outer space, to producing strange earth-monsters as unintended side-effects of nuclear radiation, and, finally, to exhibiting man's terror of small, ordinary, familiar beasts such as birds, rats, and insects which, taken *en masse*, embody malevolent power.

The physical force of a gigantic individual beast, a King Kong or a Godzilla, has given way to the subtler power of population increase, coöperation, and intelligence. What human could have failed to sympathize with an enslaved gorilla's desire for freedom and love, or with the Wolfman's terrible pangs of remorse for his excesses? What man could lack fellow-feeling for Mary Shelley's monster, ugly and awkward (because of things beyond his control—nature or fate, or man and his infernal science), wanting only love and acceptance, and becoming bitter, vengeful, destructive only after being ridiculed, rejected, attacked, and imprisoned by inhumane mankind? Contrast with this an inexplicable invasion of the city of man by thousands of birds or a few million insects. As with an invasion of the earth by an unfamiliar beast-monster from another planet, man experiences the terror of the wholly irrational, the wholly Other. Yet humor is eliminated and terror intensified by the easy metamorphosis of the small and familiar into the horrible.

At the same time come sentimental films memorializing "the vanishing wilderness" and some of its inhabitants (e.g., "the African elephant"). On the one hand, nostalgia for "vanishing species"; on the other, terror at the proliferation of other species. Nature is evidently "out of balance". Man sees his own mortality prefigured in "endangered species". Nature no longer represents the Eternal, but only perpetual succession.

Not only the beasts but the very elements of Nature seem to rise in revolt against man's dominion. The earth, water, and air become noxious with poisons. Man poisons Nature; Nature poisons man in return: the universal Golden Rule.

Along with the revolt of Nature: "bodies in revolt"—ulcers, heart trouble, hypertension, lower back pain. Fifty-seven varieties of therapy, all of them stressing "the unity of mind and body" or the "liberation of the body". Basic principle of the interpretation of dreams: everything in the dream is a fragment of the dreamer. If you dream of the beast revolting against man, you are the beast as well as the man. The philosophers and theologians used to say: man's body and its appetites are like a beast that must be kept caged by reason. The cages have begun to break.

General spirit of the age: man's world is out of control. Out of intellectual control: man is threatened by anomalies—chimps that make tools, dolphins that communicate, cinematic monsters that defy the neat categories of thing/plant/beast/man—"things" come to life. Out of practical control: the applications of man's science produce new monsters in the form of unpredictable radiation-caused mutations, in the form of unanticipated "externalities" of production, in the form of burgeoning populations of pesticide-resistant insects whose natural predators have been eliminated by scientific agriculture. Out of man's power to cope with alone: Tokyo can be saved only if the good movie monster can be beseeched

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to destroy the bad one; in Leo Szilard's fable, World War III is prevented by "the voice of the dolphins"; the crops can be saved (along with the fieldhands) only if man can replace chemical poisons with "biological controls" (that is, if some insects can be gotten to devour others); urban insomnia is licked by people who go to sleep listening to recordings of the songs of birds, whales, frogs, or wolves; Jane Goodall attempts to imitate chimpanzee child-rearing practices with her own infant son; John Lilly leads workshops designed to teach humans, insofar as possible, to become like dolphins; and a psychiatrist says that for many people "pets" (especially dogs) make excellent therapists. Small wonder that the fantasy of a planet ruled by apes is so popular/plausible.

Duality of the *Zeitgeist:* on the one hand, man lives in terror of the beast revolt; on the other, he looks for salvation from the beasts. Salvation from outside, or from within? Does man merely project his internal fears and hopes onto other beings? Or has he really begun to fear for his position as lord of the earth? Man himself does not know. His power of intuitive knowledge, his ability to feel certain, has so atrophied, his mind proliferates so many theories, that he can explain everything he experiences several ways and cannot decide among them.

Beneath all else, slumbering but soon to awaken, is the paradox—old as the seventeenth century—intensified by recent studies of animal behavior: certain beasts are "human" enough (similar to man) that experimentation on them seems justified (to man) by the possible benefit to man; yet these same beasts are "inhuman" enough (different from man) that experimentation on them (in ways that would not be allowed on man) is morally permissible. Jane Goodall lamely concludes that chimpanzees should be housed and fed better in the labs.

Once upon a time, it was physical similarity that justified experimentation, and mental/spiritual difference that was held to allow it—a distinction that hardly applies in an age when men experiment on the central nervous system and talk of "bio-computers". In truth, the modern tradition of experimentation on non-human animals is based *either* on the theological/philosophical doctrine that beasts do not have souls, *or* upon sheer force and torture. No wonder secular men dream of beasts revolting and destroying human civilization!

III. The Animal Soul

Descartes argued that non-human animals were irrational and insensible machines (like clocks), while Hume maintained that they not only experienced pleasure, pain, love, hate, and sympathy, but were "endowed with thought and reason as well as men".[1] Montaigne suggested that the beasts were closer to God and virtue than men were, while European magistrates throughout the Age of Reason still presided over the trial and execution of murderous pigs whose bodies were possessed by devils.[2] Judging from the volume of literature produced on the subject, as well as from the stature of some of the contributors, one could regard the great issue of 17th and

1 In Section III, footnotes have been added by the editor for the benefit of the scholarly reader. On the beast-machine, see René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637), fifth discourse. Cf. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), Book I, Part III, Sec. XVI.

2 Montaigne, *Essays*, "Apology for Raymond Sebond" (c. 1575-80). E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London, 1906).

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early 18th century French thought as being that of the animal soul. Did beasts have souls? If so, what type of soul, and what were the implications for man's immorality and for the justice of the universe? If not, how could the appearance of beast suffering and beast sagacity be explained?[3]

The surprise experienced by the mid-20th century human mind when it encounters these issues suggests that there has been in recent years a human consensus of sorts on the nature of beasts and on the degree and mode of their similarity to and difference from human beings. What that consensus is, we shall inquire later. In this essay we shall consider the controversy about the animal soul that accompanied the rise of the modern scientific worldview. Twentieth century man lives with a worldview whose controversial origins have been forgotten and whose "costs" therefore now come as a surprise to him. The fact is that the regime of modern science was founded on an act of violence.

Before discussing the Cartesian Revolution and its significance, it will be useful to survey the range of views to which the beast-machine was (and is) an alternative. For brevity's sake we shall group these under three headings: Theriophily, Theriophobia, and the Great Chain of Being.

1. *Theriophily*[4]

Theriophily is a perennial outlook fully visible in antiquity (Empedocles, the Pythagoreans, Plutarch, Celsus, Porphyry), largely absent in the Christian era (except perhaps for St. Francis of Assisi), recovered in the Renaissance by Montaigne and others, revivified in the Enlightenment (Hume, Rousseau), bolstered by Darwin and Kropotkin, and currently enjoying some minor fashion (John Lilly, *et al*). The common denominator is a conviction that (some) beasts and humans are closely related, are "equal" in some basic sense, even that (certain) beasts are in some ways superior to men. Theriophilists can be roughly divided into three schools.

(a) *The religious school.* The Pythagorean respect for non-human animals was associated with a belief in the transmigration of souls: the beast you were about to kill and eat could be your deceased friend or relative, or at least another human being. Accordingly, the Pythagoreans abstained from eating meat.[5]

(b) *The rational beast school.* The more common position has been that close observation of the behavior of (certain) beasts leads to such conclusions as that they reason, have their own language, and feel a wide range of sensations and emotions—all of which make them no different, or only different in degree, from human beings.[6] So that if killing, eating, or causing unnecessary pain to human beings is wrong, by the same logic it is unjust to kill, eat, or cause unnecessary pain to beasts (or at least to those who may be sentient, rational beings). Of course, different writers draw different parts of this general moral and allow different magnitudes of exception for man's "necessity" to survive and "live well".

(c) *The primitivist school.* A variant position is that of Montaigne, certain Romantic writers, and perhaps of certain of contemporaries who hold that beasts do not depend as much on ratiocination as men do, but rely more on their natural instincts and are thereby more virtuous in conduct and happier, since they do not deviate as much as man from the natural law, are less "alienated", *et cetera.*

Human readers are often uncertain how seriously to take theriophilic authors, who seem to be asking them to believe unorthodox things or to behave in deviant ways. Can such authors be serious? Easier to assume that they are not to be taken literally, that they are satiric moralists who praise beasts in order to deflate exaggerated human pretension. This view, of course, functions to reduce the sense of threat by allowing the orthodox to view the heretics as (basically) orthodox moralists in clever disguise.

But theriophilists raise two disturbing questions that are not easy to dismiss: (1) whether reason and self-consciousness are as necessary/desirable from the standpoint of virtue and happiness as has been usually assumed, or whether the latter depend more on "instinctive" sentiments such as sympathy; (2) whether man, the allegedly self-consciously rational (and therefore consistent) being, applies a double standard in interpreting behavior, so as to justify a double standard in his conduct? The best writers, such as Hume and Montaigne, raise both questions.

Consider only the second issue for a moment. A man and a dog come separately to a stream to cross. Each

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3 See George Boas, *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, 1933), Hester Hastings, *Man and Beast in French Thought of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore and London, 1936), and especially Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine: The Theme of Animal Soul in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie* (New York, 1940).

4 Therios (Greek)—beast, animal. Theriophily—the love or admiration for beasts. The term was used by Boas.

5 See G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven: *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge University Press, 1957), Ch. VII. It is not clear that the Pythagoreans were vegetarians *because* of their belief in reincarnation, since both may simply have been aspects of an underlying conviction of the close relationship between humans and beasts. Also, there is evidence that the Pythagoreans refrained from eating beans as well as meat. Empedocles said that he had been reincarnated not only as a boy, a girl, a bird, and a fish, but also as a bush. (Kirk and Raven, p. 354)—which makes his admonitions against killing flesh and shedding blood seem strangely limited.

6 Thus Plutarch ("On the Eating of Flesh", "That Brute Beasts Reason", etc.); Celsus; Porphyry *(On Abstinence from Animal Food)*; Hume *Treatise*, Book I, Part III, Sec. XVI; II, I, XII: II, II, XII. Also Darwin: "We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, etc., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals." And: "—There is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties." (*The Descent of Man*, Ch. III.)

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hesitates, moves downstream, hesitates again, moves further downstream and crosses at a narrower or shallower spot. Deliberation and choice in the man, instinct in the dog, says orthodox man. Compare the theriophilist's response:

> *It is from the resemblance of the external actions of animals to those we ourselves perform, that we judge their internal actions likewise to resemble ours; and the same principle of reasoning, carried one step further, will make us conclude, that, since our internal actions resemble each other, the causes, from which they are derived, must also be resembling.*[7]

Thus the theriophilist begins with observation and assumes that similar effects have similar causes or are outcomes of the same type of process. Does this not seem so reasonable that the burden of proof should be borne by those who, for whatever *a priori* reasons, assume that different causes/structures/processes must be invoked to account for similar patterns of behavior?

2. *Theriophobia*

More common in Western thought than theriophilia has been theriophobia, the fear and hatred of beasts as wholly or predominantly irrational, physical, insatiable, violent, or vicious beings whom man strangely resembles when he is being wicked. Thus in a state of nature "man is a wolf to man" (Hobbes). A society founded on the principle of satisfying appetites is "a city of pigs" (Plato). The basic theriophobic stance is one of disgust at "brutish", "bestial", or "animalistic" traits that are suspiciously more frequently predicted of men than of beasts, just as the types of behavior in which these traits are exhibited (egoism, insatiable greed, insatiable sexuality, cruelty, the gratuitous slaughter of other species, and the mass extermination of one's own species) are more frequently observed on the part of men than of beasts.

Theriophobia appears to be compounded of two major elements: man's disgust with his own body and appetites ("certainly man is of kin to the beasts, by his body; and, if he be not kin to God, by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature"—Bacon[8]); and man's anxiety stemming from the loss of inhibitions (*e.g.*, against the killing of one's own species) normal to other animal species. The well-spring of theriophobia is thus fear of self, and its central mechanism is projection. In the most alienated form of theriophobia, the beasts themselves were seen as animated by devils, and man's extermination of the beasts and of "savages" (bestial men) was carried on as part of God's war against Satan.[9]

3. *The Great Chain of Being*

While theriophily and theriophobia have defined the extremes, the center of the stage has been held from antiquity through Darwin by the Great Chain of Being, of which we shall take Aristotle's version as the classic example.[10]

Aristotle regarded every living entity as animated by soul (*psyche*), but there were various forms and faculties of soul. Plants were animated by the merely *nutritive* form of soul (having the faculties of nutrition and reproduction) shared by all living beings. Animals had also the *sensitive* form of soul; and from the capacity for sensation stemmed both the capacity for feeling pleasure and pain and the capacity for desire or appetite. While the very lowest forms of animal life had only the sense of touch, essential for animal survival, the higher forms had the power of local movement, imagination, and other senses than touch, which conduced to the "well-being" or "happiness" of the organism. The human animal was distinguished by his additional possession of the *intellectual* or rational form of soul, the capacity for speculative and practical reason. Mind (the rational soul) was alone imperishable, but all forms of life (vegetable, bestial, and human) strove to participate in the divine and eternal order by reproducing themselves and thereby insuring the imperishability of their species. Thus, all living beings were ensouled and strove to participate in eternity; all animals experienced pleasure and pain; and many animals (not only men) strove for a "well-being" beyond mere survival. In addition, Aristotle discussed animal sensation as "a kind of knowledge" and pointed out that there were many analogies and even identities between the psychic qualities of beasts and of humans (including in certain beasts a natural potentiality for something like knowledge, wisdom, and sagacity). The great chain of being proceeded by gradual differentiation, with complex parallels, and with many "intermediate creatures", in such a way that "it is impossible to determine the exact line of demarcation, nor on which side thereof an intermediate form should lie."

This account is drawn from Aristotle's writings in natural philosophy, which represented a conscious rejection of the Socratic-Platonic turning away from the older Greek tradition of philosophic contemplation of the natural universe.[11]

Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* present a different picture, however. In his "practical philosophy", Aristotle generally followed Socrates and Plato in regarding the world from the standpoint of the-good-for-man, so that "happiness" or "well-being" was restricted to man; the nutritive part of man's soul was viewed as incapable of contributing anything to human happiness; certain human life-styles were condemned on grounds that a man

7 Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part III, Sec. XVI.

8 Francis Bacon, *Essays*, "Of Atheism".

9 For an instance of theriophobia as a general cultural phenomenon, see the Puritan reaction to the American wilderness. (Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, New Haven, 1967, Chs. 1-2.) For a case-study in pathology, see Michael Rogin, "Liberal Society and the Indian Question" (*Politics and Society*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1971) and Rogin's forthcoming book on the Indian policy of the Jackson Administration.

10 For a historical survey of the Great Chain of Being as a "unit idea", see Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Harvard University Press, 1936).

11 Aristotle: *De Anima*, II, 2-4; III, 3, 9-12; *Parts of Animals*, II, 1; *De Generatione Animalium* I, 23; *Historia Animalium*, VIII, 1.

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who led them would be no better than a plant or a beast; and "all animals must have been made by nature for the sake of men."[12] In short, whereas in his writings on the overall universe of living beings Aristotle stressed continuities, parallels, differences of degree, the difficulty of drawing sharp lines, and the value of all beings as participants in the system of life, in his practical writings he took the part of man, sharpened the differences between man and beast, relied upon theriophobic patterns of metaphor, relegated the non-human to the status of the useful-for-man, and generally fell short of the spirit of *theoria* that he affirmed to be man's highest achievement.

Yet the *Politics* also contains the thesis that human beings differ so greatly among themselves in their capacity for rational control of action (*i.e.*, they partake of intellectual soul in such diverse degrees) that it may be just for the more rational ones to treat the more irrational ones the way man treats the beasts, that is, as "natural slaves".[13] In this respect the *Politics* approaches the more complex spirit of Aristotle's nature philosophy. The doctrine of natural slavery may seem an embarrassing anomaly to modern, humanistic, neo-Aristotelians, but it is an anomaly only from the standpoint of the kind of abstract species-dichotomizing that Aristotle and others do when they are advocates of a cause, not from the standpoint of the philosopher's Great Chain of Being. If the cause of Man *qua* Man is not assumed to be the highest possible perspective for a philosopher, then the doctrine of natural slavery, repugnant as it may be by itself, is, when taken in context, at least a step towards a less anthropocentric perspective.

Since the medieval Scholastic version of the Great Chain of Being was the chief orthodoxy against which the Cartesian Revolution was made, let us look at what happened when St. Thomas Aquinas fused Aristotle with the Bible and the Church Fathers, and had to reckon with the notion of a brute soul that was possibly different only in degree from the soul of man. The result was eclectic, to say the least.

On the one hand, St. Thomas tended to treat beasts benignly as part of God's creation instinctively sharing a part of the Natural Law with man (self-preservation, procreation, nurture of the young), but not the parts of Natural Law that required reason. On the other hand, in his discussion of anathemas, St. Thomas maintained that, while it was blasphemous to curse beasts insofar as they were the creatures or agents of God, and futile to curse beasts insofar as they were simply irrational creatures, it was proper to curse them insofar as they were satellites of Satan, "instigated by the powers of hell".[14]

Again, on the one hand, we find in St. Thomas a tendency to elaborate with fine distinctions and compound terms the notion of brute soul as an intermediate and mixed form (*e.g.*, as a substantial or material form—related to that beneath it as form to matter, and to that above it as matter to form; as a soul capable of a kind of knowledge, but only "imperfect knowledge" which allowed participation in the "imperfect voluntary", "imperfect enjoyment", *et cetera*). On the other hand, we find a stronger tendency than in Aristotle to stress and sharpen the man/beast distinction. Thus "irrational animals" could not (by definition) exercise intention, choice, consent, use, command, and so on. The "prudence" or "sagacity" remarked by certain ancient writers stemmed not from the beasts' exercise of any reason or choice but wholly from the operation of "natural instinct" implanted by the Creator. In St. Thomas' analogy, the beast behaved much as a clock ran: its movements traced a rational pattern not because it possessed mind or thought but because it was made by a rational artisan.[15]

Thus St. Thomas conceded the appearance of intelligence and choice throughout animal behavior but refused to accept it at face value because of his commitment to the Christian doctrine that man alone was created "in the image of God". While allowing men to be the agents of their own actions, he attributed the actions of beasts to the invisible controlling agency of God, a "solution" in which he was later followed by Bossuet.

4. *Descartes: the Philosophy of Vivisection*

You will have noticed that a seminal version of Descartes' great metaphor, the beast-machine, specifically the beast as clock, had already appeared in the *Summa Theologica*. Despite the fulminations of Bacon, Descartes, and other moderns against the anti-scientific spirit of Scholastic philosophy, the jump from the late medieval Christian world-view to the modern scientific-technological worldview was less great than they depicted it—as the continuity of the mechanism metaphor and what it implied about the non-human world should suggest.[16]

Descartes saw himself, and has usually been seen by others, as a rebel against his own Jesuit-classical education, as an architect of a new order who razed the ramshackle structure of Scholasticism in order to build the edifice of philosophy anew along simpler, clearer, straighter lines.[17] Simplify he did, but using old tools. Descartes seized upon one of the basic principles of classical and Scholastic philosophy, the principle that intra-species differences are always and necessarily (by definition) accidental or ones of degree, while inter-species differences are differences of nature or essence, and ruthlessly eliminated all compromise (such as substantial forms, brute souls, *et cetera*).

12 *Nicomachean Ethics, passim; Politics* 1256b

13 *Politics* 1260a.

14 *Aquinas:Selected Political Writings*, ed. A. P. d'Entreeves, Oxford, 1954, p. 123. Evans, *Criminal Prosecution*, pp. 53ff.

15 *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Questions 75-78; Part II, Questions 1-17, esp. Question 13, Art. 2.

16 For another view of this continuity, see Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (*Science*, 10 March 1967), "Continuing the Conversation" (in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Ian G. Barbour, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1973), and *Machina ex Deo* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

17 See the second discourse for Descartes' own imagery, which is that of himself as engineer, architect, or city planner, as well as geometrician.

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Thus the thrust of Descartes' emphasis was to radically sharpen and simplify the dualistic aspect of classical and Christian thought. As before, the dualism ran both between man and beast and through man's own nature, dividing the rational from the bestial part. Only the non-rational part was no longer appetite, but dead matter. Mind and matter were totally different, mutually exclusive principles. Man, it is true, was a compound of mind (soul) and body, but "the mind; by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body"; "our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body".[18] Generalizing from the involuntary character of the circulatory and respiratory systems, Descartes saw the human body as a machine designed by God to run according to physical laws. Beasts were like human bodies—divinely engineered machines, clocks, automatons. (65,163) That beasts could not reason was shown by the fact that they could not "speak", by the alleged regularity of their behavior, and by their degree of specialization. It was not that beasts had less reason than men but that they had "none at all". Hence, either their souls were "of an altogether different nature from our own" or, more properly speaking, since mind was the only "soul" worth the name, they had no souls.[19]

In reply to objections raised to the *Discourse*, Descartes made it clear that he did not deny life, sensation, or even memory to beasts. Yet the "life" that he conceded was purely a matter of the heart, blood, heat, and "animal spirits" (a supposed physical emanation from the blood). The sensations caused by the body (brute or human) were of a totally different kind than sensations caused by the mind. Hence the conclusion that beasts did not know pain, since pain was experienced only by conscious beings capable of understanding their bodily sensations. Beasts might go through the external motions that were in men the symptoms of pain, but they did so without experiencing pain as a sensation in the mind.[20]

Once all of Descartes' explanations and qualifications have been registered, there remains a difference between his view and that of most of his predecessors, but perhaps less of a difference than the sweeping metaphor of the fifth discourse led us to expect. The history of philosophy is full of cases of strikingly "new" viewpoints that are produced by a slight reordering of the observed data, a slightly different conceptualization, a shift in terminology, an illuminating (and concealing) metaphor . . . all adding up to a shift of orientation that is hard to explain in purely literal terms.[21] The appearance of novelty being often greater than the novelty itself, we may inquire into the tendency, emphasis, or thrust of any particular philosophical "innovation" and into the probable intention of its author.

The central thrust of the Cartesian dualism was not so much to divide man within himself, since the body and the mind did communicate and the body's pain was registered in the mind, and since Descartes explicitly lay (contradictory) stress upon "the union and, as it were, the mingling of the mind and the body". (79,159) The central thrust was rather to sharply divide man from the non-human world by reclassifying the living, ostensibly sentient and rational beings surrounding him (and, by implication, "lower" forms of life as well) as insensible things.

What was Descartes' purpose in doing this? The text of the *Discourse* offers two suggestions.

(1) The fifth discourse, in which the thesis of the beast-machine was set forth, concluded with the following reflection:

> *—After the error of those who deny the existence of God, which error I think I have sufficiently refuted above, there is nothing which leads feeble minds more readily astray from the straight path of virtue than to imagine that the soul of animals is of the same nature as our own, and that, consequently, we have nothing to fear or to hope for after this life, any more than have flies or ants . . . . (76)*

In other words, granted the unspoken premise that the souls of beasts were perishable, it threatened man's faith in his own immortality to think that beasts and men were very similar; and since man's morality depended heavily on his fears and hopes of a life hereafter, virtue itself was threatened. Descartes thus presented himself in the role of a defender of traditional religious faith and morality against subversive atheism. It is a historical fact that the Cartesian doctrine of the beast-machine eventually attracted support from many theologians and philosophers who seemed to value the doctrine chiefly as a bulwark against atheism and libertinism.[22]

That this was the basic intention of the Cartesian dualism, however, seems unlikely. Descartes' own account of his life, as well as the content and mood of his writings (especially the third and sixth discourses), suggests that he was a person who acknowledged conventional religion and morals so as to provide a framework of order for everyday living and to protect himself from criticism, while he plunged deeper and deeper into his real mission: scientific inquiry and the philosophy of science. Indeed, Descartes' very next page (the opening of the sixth discourse) alluded to the recent trial of Galileo and discussed

18 Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (Penguin Books, 1968), Pp. 54, 65, 76. In the remainder of the discussion of Descartes, page numbers in the text refer to the Penguin edition.

19 74ff; and Rosenfield, 11f.

20 Rosenfield, 8, 11-18: Hastings, 21f.; Leonora D. Cohen, "Descartes and Henry More on the Beast-Machine—A Translation of Their Correspondence Pertaining to Animal Automatism" (*Annals of Science*, Vol. I, No. 1).

21 For example, the novelty of Hume's moral theory was partly a consequence of his defining "reason" more narrowly and "feeling" more broadly than was traditional. A. D. Lindsay comments: "Feeling becomes for Hume, as he lays more work upon it, less and less identical with irrational impulse and more and more like reason as Aristotle conceived it." (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Everyman edition, 1911, "Introduction" to Volume II, p. xii.)

22 See Rosenfield, 37ff., 45ff., 64ff.

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his own dilemma: whether to publish his "general ideas about physics" and risk offense "either to religion or to the State", or to withhold his thoughts and thereby sin against "the law which obliges us to procure, by as much as in us, the general good of all men." (77f.) Whatever Descartes' personal piety, he was not so much a man who philosophized to bolster traditional faith as a man who felt himself to be risking the wrath of ecclesiastical authorities in the cause of advancing science.

(2) Having desensitized man's natural environment in the fifth discourse, Descartes revealed his purpose in the sixth. In place of "the speculative philosophy taught in the Schools" he offered the prospect of a "practical philosophy" which, by knowing "the power and the effects" of material "bodies", could provide "knowledge which is most useful in life", could make men "masters and possessors of nature", so that they could enjoy "the fruits of the earth and all its commodities" more easily and more fully and also achieve "the preservation of health, which is undoubtedly the first good, and the foundation of all the other goods of this life." In Descartes' metaphor, the practical philosopher or man of science was a "craftsman" who applied his knowledge of principles to produce tangible benefits. (78)

This, then, was the real Cartesian revolution. The philosophic life culminated not in contemplation (Aristotle) or "the vision of God" (St. Thomas), but in the domination and exploitation of nature through science-technology-industry and, most specifically, in the progress of the science/art of medicine, whose potentialities for improving man's estate seemed almost limitless:

> *—We could free ourselves of an infinity of illnesses, both of the body and of the mind, and even perhaps also of the decline of age, if we knew enough about their causes and about all the remedies with which nature has provided us. (79)*

It is at this point that Descartes has to retract, in effect, his earlier emphasis on the independence of mind and (human) body:

> *—Even the mind depends so much on the temperament and on the disposition of the organs of the body, that if it is possible to find some other means of rendering men as a whole wiser and more dextrous than they have been hitherto, I believe it must be sought in medicine. (79)*

What Descartes does not have to retract, of course, is his thesis that the natural environment is insensible, for the licensing of modern science-technology seemed to require the insensibility of Nature. This was not only a theoretic issue of whether natural entities were to be regarded as animated (ensouled) rather than as matter-in-motion, but also a practical question of "method and results". Thus the sixth discourse moved on to a discussion of the importance of verifying inductions by "experiments". (79ff.) Now, experimentation involves coercing, torturing, operating upon the body of Nature so as to transform it—unless Nature's body is an unfeeling, soulless mechanism, in which case, torture is not torture. In this context, the beast-machine stood as the symbol and test case for the whole body of Nature; if beasts did not feel, then all Nature was insensible.

But the beast-machine also stood very concretely for itself. The initial "progress" of modern medical science, like the philosophy of Descartes, came covered with blood from the dissecting room. It required, for its continued progress, the termination of "superstitions" that inhibited the dissection of the human cadaver as well as experimentation upon dead and live beasts.

"I would like those who are not versed in anatomy," wrote Descartes early in the fifth discourse,

> *to take the trouble, before reading this, to have cut open in front of them the heart of some large animal which has lungs, because it is, in all of them, similar enough to that of man, and to be shown its two ventricles or cavities. (66)*

There followed a detailed, six-page account of the heart and circulatory system—presumably based on Descartes' own extensive work in the dissecting room.[23] From 1629 on, Descartes worked to prepare a definitive treatise on animals ("the whole architecture of their structure, and the causes of their movements"). It remained unfinished because he was unable (for some reason not stated) to complete certain essential "experiments". Appropriately, the first champions of the Cartesian doctrine of the beast-machine were physiologists, who regarded Descartes as clearing the way for the progress of physiology as a science.[24] The influence of Descartes' special blend of scientific-technical enthusiasm and compartmentalized religious piety can be seen with particular clarity in the case of the Jansenists (including Pascal), who adopted Descartes' doctrine of animal automatism. The situation at the Jansenist seminary of Port-Royal in the late 17th century was described by a disapproving contemporary as follows:

> *There was hardly a* solitaire *who didn't talk of automata . . . . They administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference, and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they had felt pain. They said that the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck, were only the noise of a little spring which had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed poor animals up on boards by their four paws to vivisect them and see the circulation of the blood which was a great subject of conversation.*[25]

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23 On which, see Rosenfield, 4, 25. Huxley comments: "Descartes was no mere speculator, as some would have us believe: but a man who knew of his own knowledge what was to be known of the facts of anatomy and physiology in his day. He was an unwearied dissector and observer, and it is said, that, on a visitor once asking to see his library, Descartes led him into a room set aside for dissections, and full of specimens under examination. 'There,' said he, 'is my library.'" (T. H. Huxley, "On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History" (1874), in *Method and Results*, N.Y., 1898, p. 201.)

24 Rosenfield, 14, 27ff., 241ff.

25 Rosenfield, 54f., 69f., 281ff.; Nicholas Fontaine, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal* (Cologne, 1738), esp.

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Modern experimental science, dedicated to improving man's material estate, was thus founded on acts of violence against non-human nature. The historical function of the Cartesian philosophy was to legitimize this despotism, this torture, by revealing it to be neither despotism nor torture. The Cartesian sharpening of the dualism between man and beast was thus a function of the intensely "practical", technological character of Descartes' view of the purpose of knowledge. As Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* were to Aristotle's own writings on nature, so Descartes' philosophy was to the philosophy of St. Thomas. The purpose of over-simplifying the complexity of man's experience of the world, of drawing clear-cut lines across the complex fabric to reality, is to make possible action uninhibited by intellectual doubt or moral guilt. One dissects experience for practical advantage. In a letter to Henry More, Descartes remarked that his opinion on animal automatism was not so much cruel to beasts as favorable to man, since man could now eat or kill animals without guilt.[26] Vegetarianism and hunting were, of course, not the real issues; torture and murder committed in the course of modern man's quest for secular immortality were.

St. Augustine had long ago decided that beasts were incapable of suffering pain, because otherwise God would be unjust. (Assume that beasts share neither in original sin nor in eternal life; then for them to suffer pain seems to contradict the principle that "God being just, no being suffers undeservedly"; therefore, animals must not be thought to suffer pain.) The Cartesian gospel held that beasts were incapable of suffering pain, because otherwise the empire established by modern scientific man would be unjust.

4. *Man a Machine?*

By including beasts within the sphere of mechanism and matter, Descartes inadvertently suggested to others the possibility that, if apparently rational and sentient behavior could be explained on mechanistic, materialistic principles, perhaps what was true of beasts was true also of human beings. This possibility occurred to some of Descartes' earliest critics and was for many thinkers a crucial obstacle to accepting Descartes' doctrine. Throughout all the controversy over animal automatism, most thinking people probably accepted an increasingly de-theologized version of the Great Chain of Being: beasts were sensitive and intelligent beings, only significantly less so than human beings. (Such is the perspective of the article "*Ame des bêtes*" in Diderot's *Encyclopedie*.) The notion that the man/beast distinction was really one of degree underlay, in fact, the anxiety that animal mechanism might be generalized to include man, just as it had underlain for centuries the theologians' anxiety that to regard beasts as having souls would undermine faith in human immortality.

After a century of anxiety, the nightmare came true, but in paradoxical form. In 1748 the French physician and man of letters La Mettrie, published *L'homme machine*, proclaiming that "man is a machine, and . . . in the whole universe there is but a single substance differently modified."[27] Descartes was treated as a worthy predecessor who "was the first to prove completely that animals are pure machines" and who craftily adopted the doctrine of two distinct substances as a "ruse" to fool the theologians. (68) In short, the true meaning of Descartes was revealed in La Mettrie's theory of universal mechanism. (63f.)

Only, of course, La Mettrie's machines thought, felt, and distinguished good from evil. (64) In fact, they had —all of them, from plant through insect and beast to man—"souls", at least at times when La Mettrie chose to use the word. (68) It seemed that Descartes had made a mistake in conceiving of matter as mere extension; matter also had the power of motion and of feeling, and "thought is but a faculty of feeling." (60, 73) Thus La Mettrie, in the guise of universal materialism, restored the Great Chain of Being in a relatively egalitarian form:

> *Nature has created us all solely to be happy—yes, all of us from the crawling worm to the eagle in the clouds. For this cause she has given all animals some share of natural law, a share greater or less according to the needs of each animal's organs when in normal condition. (41)*

While claiming to draw out the logic of Descartes, La Mettrie elsewhere confessed that he felt himself close to "the ancients, whose philosophy, full of insight and penetration, deserves to be raised above the ruins of the philosophy of the moderns." (81) In keeping with his affection for the "ancients", as well as with his considerable skepticism,[28] La Mettrie's mood was essentially contemplative: the upshot of philosophy was not the domi-

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Vol. II, 52-3. It is a problem of critical history how much the reputation of Descartes' followers as actually treating animals cruelly can be trusted. Some of the evidence is anecdotal and consists of stories about what Malebranche said when Fontenelle winced in sympathy with the "pain" of the dog that Malebranche had just kicked, etc. The "humor" lies in the tension between common sense (animals feel pain) and ideological action (acting out the doctrine of animal automatism). The depiction of cruelty to dogs at Port Royal occurs in other writers than Fontaine (e.g., Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*). One of the most active champions of the doctrine of beast-machine was the Jansenist theologian Antoine Arnauld, the major author of the Port-Royal textbook in logic (1662), from which the following syllogism comes:

Nulle matière ne pense.
Toute âme de bête est matière.
Donc nulle âme de bête ne pense. (Rosenfield, 281.)

26 Descartes to Henry More, Feb. 5, 1649 (see Cohen, cited above in Footnote 20, p. 53).

27 La Mettrie, *Man a Machine* (including extracts from "The Natural History of the Soul"), Open Court, Chicago & London, 1927, p. 69. Subsequent numbers in this section of the text refer to this edition.

28 "—It does not matter for our peace of mind, whether matter be eternal or have been created, whether there be or be not a God. How foolish to torment ourselves so much about things which we can not know, and which would not make us any happier even were we to gain knowledge about them!" (42f.) "The nature of motion is as unknown to us as that of matter." (60) "What more do we know of our destiny than of our origin?" (68)

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nation or transformation of the world but the "tranquillity" and contemplative affection that came with a correct understanding of the nature of the universe. (68f.) With his conviction of the close relation of man and beast, together with his suspicion that too much thinking about unknowable matters led to unhappiness, and his injunction of respect and "humanity" towards all of nature (68f.), La Mettrie may also be classified as a theriophilist. We suspect that what was fundamental to La Mettrie's intent was not to show that man was a machine, or even that matter was the universal substance, but rather—like the German Idealist philosophers Hegel and Schelling in their different ways—to overcome the Cartesian dualism, to repudiate the Cartesian spirit of scientific-technological domination, and to re-establish a vision of a universe that involved a somewhat theriophilic version of the Great Chain of Being. This suspicion is supported by the discovery that in his *Natural History of the Soul*, published only three years earlier, La Mettrie had rejected the Cartesian doctrine of the beast-machine as "absurd". (79f.)

If the Cartesian sword cut two ways—to license vivesection by classifying beasts as machines, and (potentially) to include man among the machines—so did the sword of La Mettrie. On the one hand, his monism aimed at re-establishing the Great Chain of Being and the contemplative mood; on the other, his "materialism" has been taken to suggest the possibility of the universal malleability of man and nature through practical action, of man's becoming his own product. First the beasts were stripped of their souls and abandoned to the domination of science and technology; then men followed. This logic leads from Descartes to the behavioral engineering of B. F. Skinner. The creation of the beast-machine was the first step towards the dehumanization of man, and both are only moments in the larger "mechanization of the world-picture".[29] This is why contemporary efforts to "rehumanize psychology" are often so pathetic: they presuppose the Cartesian framework while thinking to rebel against the "mechanization" represented by "behavioralism". Thus Maslow:

> —*While it was necessary and helpful* [*to science*] *to dehumanize* [sic!] *plants, rocks, and animals, we are realizing more and more strongly that it is* not *necessary to dehumanize the human being and to deny him human purposes.*[30]

At such moments, at least, Humanistic Psychology seems to have bought the Cartesian/Kantian dichotomy of "humans" and "things". History suggests a more radical perspective: as man perceives and treats non-human nature, so he will eventually perceive and treat himself.

5. *Miscellaneous Materials for a Continuation*

Frontispiece for a new edition of Descartes' *Discourse*: photograph of the dimly-lit interior of a battery henhouse, showing tiers of cages containing 2,304 birds (four to a cage; .45 square foot of wire mesh floor space per bird); food troughs continuously supplied by conveyor belt; water supplied by another trough; temperature thermostatically controlled; eggs rolling to a central collection point when laid. Note: all birds are replaced at the end of one year because of "cage layer fatigue". Comment: "It is difficult to avoid the view that poultry stocks are suffering from nervous tension, due to our attempts to convert them into egg machines." (A. C. Moore in *Poultry World*, November 22, 1962.)[31]

"As a result of the division of labour on one hand, and the accumulation of capital on the other hand, the worker becomes even more dependent upon labour, and upon a particular, extremely one-sided, mechanical kind of labour. . . . he is reduced, therefore, both spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine. . . . Since the worker has been reduced to a machine, the machine can compete with him. . . . 'The important distinction between how far men work *with* machines or *as* machines, has not received attention.'" (Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, "Wages of Labour".[32])

René Dubos on "the behavioral consequences likely to ensue from [human] overpopulation": "The ever-increasing complexity of the social structure will make some form of regimentation unavoidable; freedom and privacy may come to constitute antisocial luxuries and their attainment to involve real hardships. In consequence, there may emerge by selection a stock of human beings suited genetically to accept as a matter of course a regimented and sheltered way of life in a teeming and polluted world, from which all wilderness and fantasy of nature will have disappeared. *The domesticated farm animal and the laboratory rodent on a controlled regimen in a controlled environment will then become true models for the study of man.*"[33]

"It is a frequent delusion of the schizophrenic patient that he is a machine, or that his actions are under the control of a machine outside himself." (Psychiatric textbook.) "A man who says that men are machines may be a great scientist. A man who says he *is* a machine is 'depersonalized' in psychiatric jargon." (R. D. Laing.[34]) In various works, Laing and Esterson have convincingly shown that the so-called "schizophrenic" behavior of many patients is quite comprehensible as an adaptive response to the craziness of their social context. Unfortunately, they have limited their empirical studies of the social context mainly to "the family" . . . .[35]

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29 E. J. Dijksterhuis, *The Mechanization of the World-Picture*, tr. C. Dikshoorn (Oxford, 1961).

30 Abraham H. Maslow, *The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance* (Chicago, 1966), p. 2.

31 See Ruth Harrison, *Animal Machines: The New Factory Farming Industry* (London, 1964).

32 See Karl Marx: *Early Writings*, tr. and ed. T. B. Bottomore (London, 1963), pp. 72f., 80. The last line is apparently a quotation from Wilhelm Schulz, *Die Bewegung der Produktion* (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843).

33 René Dubos, *Man Adapting* (Yale University Press, 1965), p. 313. (Emphasis not in the original.)

34 *The Divided Self* (Penguin Books, 1965), p. 12.

35 See especially Laing and Esterson, *Sanity, Madness, and the Family* (Penguin Books, 1970). Also R. D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family* (revised edition, New York, 1971).

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IV. Dolphinic Wisdom

I. *Original Sin.* Religious man separated himself from God and was driven from the garden for his pretension. Philosophic man, also in quest of short-cut wisdom, separated himself from the rest of nature, which is its own punishment. Thus Socrates turned his back on the great speculations about the nature of the universe and focused his whole attention on "the good for man". Twenty centuries later men lament that they pursue loneliness, and that their morals and politics lag dangerously behind their natural science. Perhaps the good for man cannot be comprehended out of the context of a universal good in which man shares.

2. *True Irrationality.* Man, said the ancient philosophers, is a rational animal. Animal: genus; common denominator of man and beast. Rational: species; the principle distinguishing man from beast. Assume the distinction to be valid, and ask the following question. If you and I have certain qualities in common and certain qualities in difference, is it obvious that I (or you) ought to live so as to maximize the qualities that distinguish us? Classical philosophy, from Socrates on, is based on a choice, and that choice is arbitrary: it is not made in accordance with any general principle that is self-evident, nor is it deducible from another principle that is in turn self-evident. The *reductio ad absurdum* of the classical choice is modern "individualism" in its "Romantic" form —the cult of individual eccentricity. Classical thought stopped short of that, of course. But why? The preference for differentiation at the species level is an unjustified presupposition of the philosophic tradition.

3. *Waiting.* Once before, around the time of Plato and Aristotle, the dolphins began tentatively to approach man. But first philosophers, then religious men, turned their backs on us in disinterest or hostility, and we retreated into the depths of the sea to await a better time. Now men in desperation voyage into outer space, searching far-off planets for signs of intelligent, non-human life. We wait and wonder whether man is ready.

4. *Transcendence.* In the lore of the dolphins it is recorded that at some moment in time a few individual human beings will break through to a new, transhuman level of consciousness, will become true philosophers comprehending the whole in all its parts, and will quietly leave the city of man and make contact with the dolphins. There are several versions of this legend. In one, the philosophers join the dolphins and never return. In another, they return out of a sense of duty to bring the good news to their fellow men and are imprisoned in lunatic asylums. In a third, they join forces with the dolphins, execute a bloodless *coup d'état,* and establish their benign and pacific rule over the rest of the animals (both human and other). In a fourth, the philosophers and the dolphins lead a bloody insurrection of all the beasts, smash all machines, and eliminate the human race as irredeemably depraved and dangerous to the planet. □

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JERALD BULLIS

NOTHING IN EXCESS

Aimless as death I have wandered
    Into the bushgroves of the coves,
    Sand-sodden with the sea's
Unoriented night-usage,
    And flecked with calm

Terror have turned away
    Into the crabspider's mid-
    web iridescence;
I have gone out to the ebbtide bowsprit sand
    And chilled to the noonlight working

Wonders in the clammeat-glutted
    Snailtrove; aimless as the sea's
    Mid-depth beckon I have given
Over as much of my going as I know
    To give to the protean

Modalities of the wind,
    And though taken with it
    Have not been taken by it;
So now before the day goes
    Ripe and sanguine

With my dark, should I take on
    Off from the ooze-laved
    Locks of the covebush,
The crabspiders' quorum of cocked silence,
    The headlands iridescent

With an industry of flies and
    The wind at a gauzy twaddle
    In the bayrush:
Should I take my unappropriated
    Longing off to where

The gallivant of words
    Is barnacles on
    Unsustaining silence,
And writhe out the night wormy
    With nothing?

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Bobby Rex didn't get famous overnight. I knowed all along he'd get a name for hisself, but he wasn't no overnight star. He was picking guitar, Pa says, when he was eight. Bobby Rex would say, "No, Pa. You forget. I was six. For Christmas you and Ma gave me that plastic crank-a-tune job. But I started using the strings. Remember, Pa?" But Pa always argued that Bobby Rex was eight and that no six year old knothead could play no guitar. And now Pa got away with it cause Bobby Rex wasn't around to defend hisself. I would've been on Bobby Rex's side, only I wasn't born yet when Bobby Rex was six. Pa even told the man from the newspaper who come by for an interview that Bobby Rex was eight when he first played guitar. I wrote that to Bobby Rex in a letter once, but he never said nothing about it when he wrote back. So I guess he didn't worry what Pa said anymore.

The first time I knowed Bobby Rex was going to be famous was the night I went with Ma to the homecoming dance over at the high school. There wasn't anybody to stay with me at home cause Pa was at the tobacco auction in Colbey Cross and Paddy was going to the dance herself. Ma was going to pour punch, and I had to sit in one of them cold slick folding chairs that circled the shiny gym floor. Bobby Rex was the main attraction, and I felt real proud when he come out on stage and all the girls cooed and crinkled their faces at him. His brown hair swooped back from his fine wide forehead, and his big eyes were like two bright holes in his face. He pronounced the words in his songs real careful so that his dimples showed up good. He looked straight into the lights as he sung, and his body jacked the rhythm like a pump. He was proud of hisself, but it was the kind of pride that showed itself open-faced and honest, and nobody hated him or was jealous. When he done "Lonesome Town" everybody in the audience was so quiet I was afraid his voice would crack. But they was swaying and dreamy-eyed, and I got a little shiver in me like he was somebody I didn't know. I felt I was important just for being his brother and having all the girls know I'd seen him in his pajamas before. He told me once that his new girlfriend Phoebe had asked him what he slept in and that girls liked to know things like that about men they was sweet on.

Bobby Rex told me alot about girls, mostly cause he had plenty of them to talk about. We shared a room then, and he'd keep me wide-eyed till midnight with his stories. Like the one about him and Dinty Toompus going skinny dipping in Sawyer's Creek only cause Dinty thought that with no moon out Bobby Rex couldn't see nothing. But he said he seen plenty of what counts. He told me the water was so cold that Dinty's tits stuck out like huge red goosebumps, and he started calling her Pom-Pom Queen after that even though she wasn't. I felt real shameful the next time Dinty Toompus come to the house. My ears burned like somebody'd boxed them good, and I couldn't look her in the face when she patted the top of my head and poured out her sugary voice on me, "How you doing, little brother Leon?" I felt bad cause my mind had done alot of wrong to Dinty Toompus.

I knowed for certain that Bobby Rex was going to be

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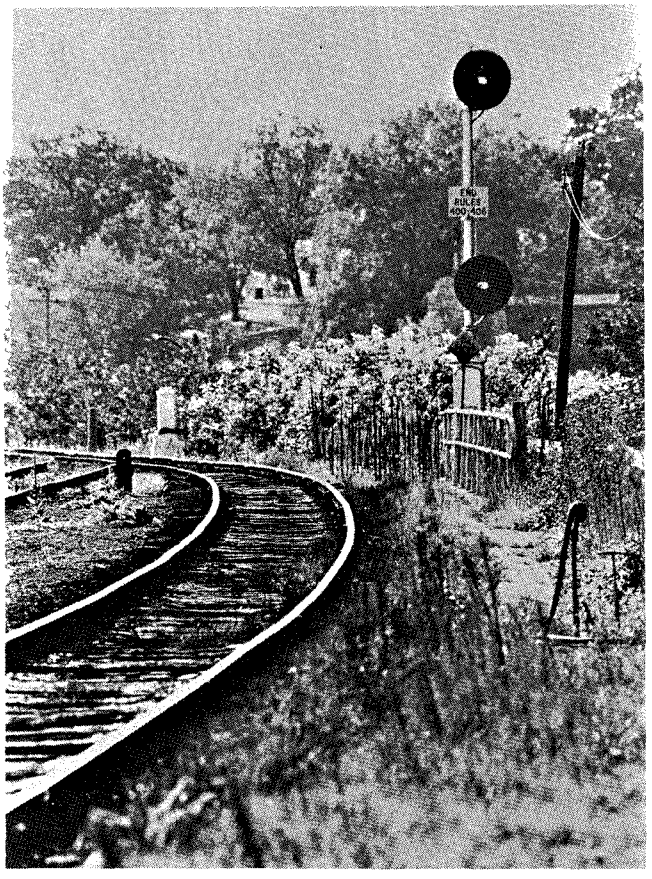

TIMOTHY WHITE

No News

A STORY BY MARIANNE GINGHER

a star after I seen him sing at the dance. It was different seeing him in them bright red lights than at home where he sung kind of soft and let his voice swing free and careless. He'd stop and cuss if he made a mistake and tighten a string and then go on, throwing in words that didn't belong if he was tired. But there at the dance he was smooth and slick as a tomcat. He knowed it, and so did everybody else. After it was over he walked with me and Ma out to the car. His face was real sweaty and little brown crisps of hair was falling on his brow and he was happy and talking alot. People waved and hollered at him, "Bobby Rex, Bobby Rex, that was a fine show." He'd shrug and grin like he'd done it a million times and backwards before. But on the inside he knowed it was something and he was proud.

That summer after graduation Bobby Rex worked at Hogan Royal's Esso and saved his money in a bank account. He only allowed hisself one night out a week, and he called it his weekly splurge. That's when him and Phoebe Jenkins was thick, and he'd take her out to Woody's Danceland where everybody went in the summertime on Saturday nights. You couldn't miss Woody's even if you was a stranger just riding through. For ten miles on either side of it there was signs saying THIS WAY TO WOODY'S . . . NINE MILES TO WOODY'S . . . EIGHT MILES TO WOODY'S . . . TRY OUR CIDER. The signs was shaped like a foot cause everybody danced barefoot at Woody's in the summertime. There was a big sawdust floor and a jukebox and long pine benches that bled sap in hot weather so you had to be careful where you sat. They sold cool hard cider and snowball cones and watermelon and fried apple pies, and sometimes Bobby Rex would slip me home some cider in a paper cup and maybe one of them pies. I'd lay in bed propped up on one elbow and sip the cider slow so I could feel it sting me all the way down. And Bobby Rex would tell me about Blimpy Miller getting beat up in the parking lot or how Shilda Hawk was making eyes at him all night or about Willard MacIntosh getting so drunk that he started spitting watermelon seeds on everybody and laughing and dancing around so hard that his pants split and they had to carry him home. Bobby Rex made me feel I'd been there myself, and pretty soon I'd be laughing at everything he said and feeling fuzzy on my insides. Bobby Rex would talk while he undressed, and after the lights was out and we was in bed, he'd start telling me about Phoebe and how she wanted to get married and rode in the car with her hand on his leg and talked about having babies and if it really hurt as much as people said. Bobby Rex said he didn't know if it hurt all that bad but that he'd seen our cow drop a calf and it seemed to him there wasn't much to it. He asked Ma one night right out of the blue at supper if it hurt to have babies. Ma got pink in the face and her mouth pinched up like a little white wire and she told him that

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MARIANNE GINGHER was a prizewinner in CAROLINA QUARTERLY'S *1973 Young Writers Fiction Contest. She lives in Chapel Hill.*

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the supper table was no place to talk about womanly things but that all good things hurt a little.

Bobby Rex stayed home a lot that summer he was working at Royal's. If he wasn't at the station, he'd be home with his guitar practicing his picking mostly, cause he said he'd done all of what he could ever do with his voice. He'd sit out on the porch swing after supper and thumb out all the songs he knowed. Mid-way through the evening Ma would come out with some fresh squeezed juice and a piece of pie for us both. Me and Bobby Rex, we'd sit there eating our pie and watching the moths catch fire in the porch light, and the crickets would chirp so loud it was like they was trying to make up for not being heard when Bobby Rex was playing. We'd finish our pie at almost the same time and wipe our mouths with our arms and then without saying nothing Bobby Rex would take up his guitar and start his playing all over again. One night when we was eating our pie, he told me what he was going to do with the money. I knowed it was his big secret cause him and Pa was always having words about it. Pa was sore cause Bobby Rex wasn't in the fields that summer. Pa said Hogan Royal was a swindler and besides he needed help with the crop and it was Bobby Rex's duty as oldest son to help his family out. But Bobby Rex said he made eighty-five an hour at the pumps and that was thirty-five better than he could do in tobacco. Pa's face would go red as liver and he'd ball up his fists till the knuckles popped out big and yellow as corn. "Well, if you're making that much, boy, you'd maybe just better move on out and git yourself your own house and buy your own food. What you saving for anyhow? You and that Phoebe Jenkins ain't planning to run off, are you, boy?" The bloodveins in Bobby Rex's temples would bulge dark and his jaw would scrape back and forth and he'd look at Pa so mean and hard that I'd think he was going to belt Pa's nose flat. But when he was really mad, he just couldn't get it out with words. It was all inside him, kicking around, mashing up his thoughts so bad that he'd finally just walk out on Pa. And I think that got Pa worse than if Bobby Rex had punched him good like he ought.

Nobody could get it out of Bobby Rex what he needed the extra money for. He'd never been much of a saver before and Ma and Pa thought it was awful strange for him to be stashing his money away in a bank. But I never asked him what it was for. I guessed he was most likely saving up for a new guitar, as his was just about wore out. And even if he wasn't saving for no guitar, I figured he needed the money real bad for something just as important. Anyhow, I felt special the night we was sitting on the porch just after eating our pie, and he struck up talking about the money of his own notion. He told me the secret was beating on his insides and had to get free and that I was the person he had picked to tell cause he knowed I wouldn't tell. I felt real proud Bobby Rex trusted me like he did. He said he reckoned I was just about the only one in the family that understood him any. He said him and Paddy weren't all that close on account of her being a girl and him being three years older. I said there was seven years between him and me and he said, yeah, but you're a fella and that makes alot of difference. Besides, he said, Paddy was a big-mouth and was bent on telling Ma everything she got wind of. And Ma, she didn't keep much from Pa, even though for her own good sometimes she ought. Anyhow, he said the time was right to tell somebody who would listen and understand what he aimed to do with the money, cause pretty soon the whole town would know about it. There's a big talent show in Nashville the last week in September, Bobby Rex told me. And that's where I'm going. It's put on by all the local t.v. stations, and there's a $500 top prize. Hogan Royal says I need plenty of spending cash for Nashville. Some in my wallet and some in my shoe case I get rolled. Then, Bobby Rex told me what it was like to get rolled, according to Hogan Royal's cousin Merve who had it done to him one time when he went to Nashville. Course he was dead drunk, Bobby Rex told me, when two fellas put him down, and I don't aim on getting drunk. I've got nearly $350 saved, Leon, and that's enough for my bus ticket and food and a room for a week and enough money left over for any emergency matter and shopping for a new guitar. Nashville's the only place to get a guitar, Bobby Rex said. I asked him how come he knowed about the contest, and he told me that Merve Royal brought him a poster about it from his last trip to Nashville. He said he'd heard about the contest in the spring and that's when Hogan Royal had offered him work at the station, cause Hogan knowed how bad he needed the cash. He said Pa would blast him if he thought he was aiming to blow all that money taking a trip. Pa never did fancy anybody spending alot in one place. And Ma would say that entering a contest was like gambling. Ma always said that Bobby Rex's voice was a gift from heaven and that he should give of it freely and expect nothing in return but the satisfaction of pleasing the ears of those less fortunate in their talents.

I watched Bobby Rex's face bobbing gray and white in the shadows with its calm proud look, and I felt a great chill run over me like I always done when a secret cracked open and I was on the inside. I grinned up at him through the dark, but his eyes was far away and he was reaching for his guitar again.

The morning Bobby Rex left, I was awake before he was. The alarm clock he put under his pillow hadn't buzzed off yet, but something told me I'd had all the sleep I was going to get and my eyes popped open fresh like they always done on Christmas morning. I laid in bed staring at the ceiling and waiting to hear the clock go off. I waited a long time, and then I started thinking that there was too much light in the room for it to be just past five. Bobby Rex had a bus to catch at 6:07 in front of the Esso. I kept still long as I could, then I whispered across the room to Bobby Rex. He was all knotted up in his covers, breathing hard and steady. But when he

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caught my voice he jerked straight up and said, "Is it time, Leon?" I told him I'd been listening for the alarm a good while, so he fished around under his pillow until he found the clock, and it read quarter to six. "I must of forgot to crank the goddurn thing!" he grumbled. I knowed he'd have to run most of the way to Hogan's to make that bus now.

He slid into his shirt and pants faster than I'd ever seen him move. And he spat on his hands and slicked them backwards through his hair. Then he counted his money out of his wallet and slipped out ten sawbucks that he rolled real careful and stuffed down inside one of his new boots he had bought special for the trip. They was fine boots, black cowhide with some red and yellow curlycues running up the sides. When he took them out of the box, I smelt them all over the room. He looked real fine in them boots with his guitar strapped over one shoulder, and I got the feeling looking at him that he weren't no part of me. That here was a stranger standing in the middle of my bedroom. I didn't know what to say to him, seeing him all dressed up and the time running out so quick. But Bobby Rex, he took care of all that. He come over to my bed and hugged me hard against him and said, "Thanks, Leon." Then, quick, he drawed away and shook my hand hard and asked me if I could handle things and I said I guessed I knew what to do and he told me he'd send me a postcard and then he was gone. He walked out of the room on his toes so his new boots wouldn't talk out, and he didn't turn around at the door to say goodbye like I thought he would. But Ma always says folks who say goodbye ain't aiming on coming back.

2.

I guess I went back to sleep after Bobby Rex left, cause next thing I knowed Ma was calling through the door that I'd be late for school if I didn't get up. I yelled back that I wasn't going to school that day, I was sick, and Ma said let her come in and feel me for a fever. But I said no, it was the stomach ache and that I didn't have no fever, it was just my stomach. She said come down and eat something and let Pa have a look at me. So I put on one of Bobby Rex's long-tail flannel shirts over my underpants and went downstairs.

Pa was eating oatmeal and flipping through a tractor catalog, and Paddy was laying the rest of our places. "You don't look sick to me, Leon Mosley," Paddy said, but I pretended I didn't hear her.

"Bobby Rex up yet?" Ma asked, setting a platter of steamy eggs in front of me that made me near gag just looking.

"He's been up," I said.

"What's the matter with you this morning, boy?" Pa grumbled, not looking up from the page with the yellow tractor on it.

"My stomach feels like I'm going to upchuck."

"Sit down and eat some eggs, Leon. You need something in you," Ma said, testing me for fever with a damp hand she laid cross my forehead. "Why, you're cool as I am."

"I said it ain't no fever, Ma. I said it was something wrong with my stomach."

"Bobby Rex been bringing you sweets from the station?"

"No he ain't."

"I seen you up there yesterday drinking Co-Colas," Paddy butted in.

"No you ain't either," I said.

"Did too."

"One Co-Cola ain't going to give me the ache like I got now, Paddy."

"You just want to lay out of school today cause you ain't got your lessons. Right, Leon?"

"Didn't have none 'cept spelling, and Bobby Rex called my words out to me."

"Where is Bobby Rex?" Ma asked all of a sudden.

"I'll just bet he called them words out to you," Paddy huffed.

"Bobby Rex is gone," I said, looking down at the tablecloth, feeling like I was going to bust out smiling any minute. I planned to let the secret come out slow. It was like chumming little hungry fishes, tossing out bait a tidbit at a time.

"Hogan Royal sure does have that boy under his thumb," Pa mumbled, oatmeal running down his jaw. "Since when did they start taking cars before eight?"

"Oh, they still don't take nobody before eight." I said it slow and careful.

"Leon, you better get dressed for school. Strother'll be by soon," Paddy nudged me.

"I said I ain't going."

"Eat your eggs, Leon, and then we'll see how you're feeling." Ma spooned a big mushy hunk of them on to my plate and poured me some coffee.

"Hogan Royal's a swindler," Pa said, flipping to another page of the catalog. "Them recaps he sold me ain't been worth two cents. I should've knowed not to trust him."

"Bobby Rex don't think Hogan Royal's a swindler," I said.

"Your eggs is getting cold, Leon," Ma said, touching my shoulder.

"Hogan's been good to Bobby Rex, Pa."

"Hogan Royal's making something off Bobby Rex, boy, and don't think he don't know it. He didn't have half the customers he's got now before Bobby Rex started working the pumps for him. All Bobby Rex's friends come around now and things is picked up for Hogan. That's what the fellas down at the Texaco say. They say Bobby Rex has got a way with customers Hogan ain't."

"Did Bobby Rex get breakfast?" Ma asked.

"No. Didn't have time."

"You see? You hear that Willa Mae? Rushing off to the station with an empty gut. Hogan Royal's got his thumb on the boy and he's squeezing hard."

"I didn't say Bobby Rex went to the station, Pa." I waited what seemed like it ought to be a long time for

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somebody to say something, but it was like they didn't hear me. Pa bit into his toast and chewed with his mouth open. And that was all I heard for a while.

"Pass me the butter, boy," was what he said. I watched him spread the butter thick on the end of his toast. Some got on his big red fingers, and he licked them off clean so he could turn the pages of the catalog.

"Bet you're feeling better now, ain't you?" Paddy said sweetly, knocking my leg with her foot under the table.

"I can't eat no eggs," I said. And then, cause I couldn't stand it no longer, I said, "Well, don't nobody care where Bobby Rex is?"

"If Bobby Rex wants to pump gas for Hogan Royal the rest of his life, it's his bad luck and I ain't meddling in it no more," Pa growled through his chewed up toast.

"He ain't pumping gas today, Pa. Don't nobody hear around here?"

"Where is he, then?" Ma asked. She said it in her wore-out voice, in the same easy way she might ask how much is potatoes a pound. She didn't even crunch up her eyebrows or come close at me in my face like always when she knowed I was holding a secret. She moved away from the table with the coffee pot in her hand, not even waiting on hearing the important thing I was ready to say.

"Bobby Rex is gone to Nashville." The voice I said it in was a new one. Each word come out clear and fine by itself and hung in the air between me and them with the kind of long drawed-out hum Bobby Rex's guitar strings made when he plucked them hard one at the time. I listened to the sound of them roll away, but nobody said a word. I seen Pa raise his eyes up slow from the catalog. His head was still bent over the page he was on, but his eyes was up so the whites drooped like meal sacks and the rims underneath showed bloody red. Them eyes was on me hard like they was trying to poke a hole clean through my skin. I looked over to Paddy who had let her jaw drop down like she had the palsy. I couldn't see Ma behind me with the coffee pot going to the sink, but I knowed she stopped solid when she heard what I let out. I couldn't hear no sound at all but the drip of water from the faucet spitting out the time I was going to have to wait till somebody said something. I felt all prickly inside like the wind had blowed out of me, but I felt good, too, and I knowed Bobby Rex would've been proud to see how I handled things. I thought about him sitting on the Greyhound in them new cowhide boots with his guitar in one seat and him beside it in the other, riding along without a care in the world, and how he'd said he'd send me a postcard.

"What did you say, boy?" Pa's voice was quiet and kind of bubbly like he needed to clear it. But his eyes looked mean and bloody.

"I said Bobby Rex is gone to Nashville, Tennessee. He left on the Greyhound bus this morning and he's gone to be in a singing contest."

"You ain't lying, are you, boy?"

"Bobby Rex is gone to Nashville," I said again. I looked Pa straight on in the eyes, not blinking or letting my mouth twitch, which was the signs he looked for when he knowed I was making something up on him.

"No sir, you ain't lying, goddammit!" And Pa's fist come down like thunder on the table till the dishes rattled and the coffee sloshed out of the cups. "I knowed it would come to this. I knowed it but nobody would listen. Goddam his hide! Hogan Royal's put the notion in his mind. He done it to the fool boy. That man's a swindler and a big-talker. He blowed up Bobby Rex's head with hot air, same as he would a tire. How much money did he take, Leon?"

"I reckon he took it all, Pa."

"Bobby Rex is a crazy fool! How come a man don't know what's coming in his own house? I tell you, it's the devil working his will. The devil is in to Bobby Rex now, and Hogan Royal put him there." Pa slammed the catalog shut. He was sitting tall in his chair with his chest heaved out. His face was hot and dark as boiled beets and his jaw jutted out, grinding back and forth like a mule's lip cribbing corn.

I twisted around in my chair and looked at Ma. Her long bony hands was knotted up in little balls at her sides, and her face was white as soda. "Why didn't he say nothing, Leon?" she said soft, like everything had been pumped out of her and it was her last breath she was asking with.

"I'll tell you why!" Pa bellowed. "Cause he knowed it was the notion of a crazy man what had got into his brain, and deep on the inside he was ashamed of hisself. Breaking his back over them pumps all summer long, stashing his money away for something he made us think was of high and mighty importance. Wouldn't talk about it none. Just kept stashing away that cash. Wouldn't work with the crop. Not enough pay, he said. Now, what's he going to have when he comes back, if he comes back? I ask you, what's he going to have solid in his hands to show he worked a whole summer getting it?"

"He aims to get a guitar, Pa."

"Now ain't that something! Willa Mae, did you hear that? Bobby Rex is aiming to buy hisself a guitar. Dammit, boy, he's got hisself a guitar. What's a fool going to do with two guitars less he has four hands? Now you tell me that. Say, boy?"

"His is just about wore out, Pa."

"So, he has to ride to Nashville on a Greyhound bus to buy hisself a new guitar? They got a passle of guitars over at Wilbur Rice's Variety Store. But no, Bobby Rex got to ride 300 miles to Nashville to do hisself some shopping. Now, ain't that a hooting laugh!"

"He says they make them good in Nashville, Pa. Real good guitars."

"Bobby Rex ain't got a lick of sense. I was only thinking he didn't, but now I know for double sure he ain't. He ain't no son of mine, sneaking around me like he done. Hogan Royal's learnt him good."

"He knowed you be sore, Pa, but he done what he thought was right."

"Right? Right, you say? Blowing money like it comes natural? Sneaking round my back like a pea-eyed rat,

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slipping off at the crack of dawn not telling nobody nothing, not caring about anybody but hisself? Comes a sad day in a man's life when he finds out his son don't know right from wrong." Pa ripped his fingers through his hair while he talked.

"You ain't said nothing about the contest, Pa," I said.

"Don't matter. Bobby Rex has his head puffed out. It's stuffed full of sugar-talk by Hogan Royal and his likes. Bobby Rex ain't even been in a big city before. He won't know no contest when he seen it."

"Tell me about the contest, Leon," Paddy said, leaning forward on her elbows.

"It's a singing contest in Nashville," I said. "There's a $500 top money prize that Bobby Rex is going to try for."

"It'll be fixed, too, you can bet on it," Pa said. "I seen them things before at the State Fair. Like beauty contests. Them judges is already been tipped off and them clapping machines is always rigged. Any fool knows that."

I turned around to Ma. She was sitting on the counter stool with her hands over her eyes, and her shoulders was trembling. I felt sorry for her cause I knowed it was hard on her. Pa just blowed it out of hisself and that was it. But Ma kept it all twisted up inside herself. Her and Bobby Rex was like that the same way. I got up and went over beside her and patted her real friendly.

"Why didn't he tell nobody, Leon? Why didn't he say?" she asked.

"I done said why, woman," Pa busted out again. "He knowed we take him for the fool he is, and that boy's got pride. He's got pride you can smell a mile off. The boy don't know his place no more. Folks telling him all the time, why, Bobby Rex, what a fine voice you got. Bobby Rex, you sure do pick guitar good."

"He could of told somebody," Ma sniffed.

"He told me, Ma," I said.

"I know, Leon," and she squeezed my hand.

"You know what people's going to say now, don't you?" Pa grumbled. "They're going to say Bo Mosley can't keep control in his own house. You can bet on it. The blame'll be on me. They'll be saying Bobby Rex broke loose on account of his old man being easy. First he don't work the crop no more. Gets hisself a job down at Royal's Esso. Farming ain't good enough for him. Then he slips off to Nashville without a word like he don't owe nobody nothing."

"How'd he know about the contest?" Paddy asked.

"He just did," I said. I figured Hogan Royal'd been reamed enough already without bringing it up about his cousin Merve giving Bobby Rex the contest poster.

"And to think I had the idea he was saving up for him and Phoebe Jenkins to run off on." A mean hard laugh sawed its way out of Pa's throat.

"Him and Phoebe ain't nothin no more, Pa. I knowed that," Paddy said.

"Bobby Rex don't know a good thing when he seen it!"

"Phoebe Jenkins has got a big head," Paddy snapped.

"Well, the two of them would make a damn good pair, then. A woman like that might be just what could settle Bobby Rex down. When I was his age I wasn't running off to Nashville to buy no guitars. No sir! I was breaking my back in them fields and buying food for my own table and fixing to be a daddy soon. And them things sober a man. Them things is what *makes* a man. Bobby Rex ain't never going to grow up." Pa rubbed his chin with his napkin till it was pink and shiny and then scraped his chair back from the table and stood up. "I've a good mind to just take myself a little ride up to Nashville and hunt that boy down," he roared. Then, he flung his napkin on the table, like it was a rock he was aiming at somebody, and stomped out of the kitchen. The screen door blasted shut behind him, and a creepy quiet took over the room like it does on the insides of a church. I stared at my face rocking back and forth in the cold coffee. It gave me a big swelled up nose when I leant in close.

"He ain't really going to Nashville, is he, Ma?" Paddy asked.

Ma didn't answer. She was still drooped over the counter with her chin in her long white hands. Her eyes was gray as rain and stared wide out the window. She wasn't no little woman, but she looked small then, all crumpled up on the stool. The veins in her arms and hands stuck out bright blue, and she had sad little flowers on her apron. "Pa ain't going after Bobby Rex, is he?"

"Your Pa'll do what he thinks is right," Ma said, never turning her face from the window.

"You going to school, Leon?" Paddy whispered to me.

"No."

"Me neither," she said.

3.

Bobby Rex done told me he'd most likely be in Nashville a full week. The day he left was a Monday, and the contest wasn't till Saturday night, but he said he needed time to rest up from travelling and to look for a good guitar. He told me it took time to break in a new guitar and that by going early he'd have time without rushing hisself into a quick deal. If he won the contest he might come back early, he said. But if he lost, he'd need some private time to hisself to get over his blues. Anyhow, he told me not to count on seeing him for a week.

It was lonesome having a room all to myself. That first night I couldn't get to sleep. I laid in bed on my back, and my eyes pushed at the ceiling like they was waiting for the roof to open up. The wind crackled in the curtains and swung them out from the windowsill so that the moon come in strong and poured itself all over the room like melted money. It was too bright to sleep, so I did some thinking, and mostly it was about Bobby Rex and how I knowed that he was going to win that top prize money. I tried to think what he was doing right then, and I decided he was pulling off them new cowhide boots and dropping into the sack hisself. I wondered what it would be like to go to Nashville on my own, but I knowed I'd never have the nerve like Bobby Rex. And

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then I seen Bobby Rex. He was on a big wide stage with purple lights in his face so that I hardly recognized him. And he was wearing them new boots and a silver shirt and silver jeans and singing so hard that tears was running down his face. Phoebe Jenkins was there, too, trying to climb up on stage. But a big fat man in a checkeredy coat kept poking his cane in her face and saying, "Shh! Shh!" Then, Phoebe Jenkin's head started blowing up, and it got bigger and bigger until she was rising off the ground, waving her arms frantic to keep her balance. All the time Bobby Rex was singing like his throat was going to bust, and the sound boiled in my ears so bad that I had to put my hands to my head. That was at the moment when Phoebe Jenkin's giant face split right down the middle, and shiny gold powder spilled out of her mouth. It must of been the prize money cause everybody in the audience cheered and screamed that Bobby Rex had won. But he kept on singing and wouldn't look. He kept singing so that the veins in his neck bulged out like thick green rope, and his eyes popped big as eggs, and he couldn't stop for nothing. I woke up sweaty and beat the alarm clock with my fist, but the sound kept sawing at my ears till I had to burrow under my hot damp pillow and wait for things to be quiet again and my heart to stop knocking so fierce. I was still breathing hard when Ma tapped at my door and told me I was going to school this morning, like it or not, and had better not be late.

I went down to breakfast and Pa wasn't there. His place was cleared off clean, and Ma was washing his dishes in the sink. "Morning, Ma."

"Your eggs is in the oven, Leon."

"Where's Pa?" I opened the oven door and took out the warm plate.

"Your Pa's gone off on business," Ma said, wiping her hands on her apron, handing me a fresh washed fork.

"Where'd he go?"

"Sit down and eat or you'll make yourself late."

"Where'd he go, Ma?"

"Tell him where Pa's off to," Paddy said, strutting into the kitchen with a smug smart look on her face like she was part of some big secret.

Ma sighed. "He's gone to see Hogan Royal down at the station."

"What he done that for?"

"Your Pa says he aims to get at the bottom of this thing."

"What thing?"

"Leon Mosley, you know good and well what thing," Paddy snipped.

"And I reckon I don't neither. What thing, Ma?"

"It's your Pa's affair. His and Hogan Royal's. Now, eat up, Leon."

"Don't nobody tell me nothing."

"Bobby Rex told you plenty," Paddy snapped. I stuffed my food down and didn't say nothing else.

It was a mile walk to school. Paddy rode with Strother Mottsinger in his old rebuilt Dodge he'd painted nigger pink. Most mornings they gave me a lift, too, but I felt like walking and being to myself this morning, so I was gone before Strother come by.

Narrow Gauge Road run right by our house and took you into town if you wanted to go that way. I knowed a short cut, though, by cutting across the road and down a cow path on the other side. The path run into some woods that edged Sawyer's Creek where us kids swam in the summer and Bobby Rex had took Dinty Toompus skinny dipping. The path crossed the creek in a spot that was dry this time of year, and then it petered out at the start of a corn field which was behind the school. It was a fine walk this time of day. The path was powdery with dust cause we ain't had rain for a while, but the grass and leaves was dewy wet and smelt like bugs and animals. The smell was thick in my nose, sweet and damp like a cool rinsed washcloth pressing on my face. There was some of them brown puffballs growing off to one side of the path. The kind you can kick and they explode. I knocked a few with my foot and little chocolate-colored clouds of smoke puffed out the split-open tops. Bobby Rex always said them things was spitting their seeds out when they got ripped open, but I didn't see no seeds.

I felt happy about the day except when I thought about Pa storming in on Hogan Royal. But I didn't let myself think about it long. I felt full with a kind of lightness and strong like running, and I knowed I'd be important at school when I'd give out the news about Bobby Rex.

Sawyer's Creek wasn't wide where I crossed to get to the cornfield. It was a good spot for getting fish bait cause it was shallow there. In summer we'd wade there and trap the crawdads and minnows that got theirselves washed down. Me and Elmo Rice had set up a fish bait stand last summer on Narrow Gauge. We catched ourselves a pailful of creatures, and Elmo made us a sign with flashy red paint his daddy gave him, and we sold three-fifty worth in a single day. Some fella in a big white Caddy convertible pulled over and snapped a camera picture of me and Elmo before we knowed it was us he wanted the picture of. The lady in the seat beside him wore a bright scarf and had great big purple lips that smiled so wide I said to Elmo they must be made of rubber. She made the man buy a can of crawdads even though he said he wasn't aiming on doing no fishing. She laughed and smacked them giant lips and said we was something off a picture postcard and she just had to have a can of our crawdads. When they drove off she turned around and grinned wide at us with them lips as fat as two squished grapes. Elmo said he'd like to buy a set of them wax lips for Halloween and go as that lady, and I reckon we laughed all afternoon about that.

This morning there was just mud in the hole where we waded in hot weather. It was that kind of black spongy mud that has a good rotten smell to it like fish drying in the sun. I seen a toad there, hidden under a little cape of leaves in the creek bottom. He was still as a twig when I bent my face close down. His back was bumpy as the mud and just the same color. I watched his goosefleshed throat glob and his eyes never blinked

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at all. And I could have stomped him flat with my foot and them eyes would have never blinked at all.

I hurried on down the middle of the cornfield. The stalks was dried and stiff as wheel spokes and picked at my shirt like fingers. The wind rattled through the papery leaves and made a cold chatter like teeth burring a chill. I seen the rags of a scarecrow hung loose on a pole near the edge of the field. They blowed limp in the wind like dead men's clothes, and I wondered what good they was doing now or if they ever did any good anytime. Looking straight ahead I could see the brown fuzz of the ball field and the school rising high and solid above. I thought I'd hear the first bell ring on my way across the field, but then I didn't see nobody and I knowed I was late. I broke into a run and didn't let up till I was at the door.

When I seen Elmo in the hall it come into my mind that he was the one I wanted to tell first. It was good to be back in school when I knowed I'd be important that day. Elmo seen me and flapped his hand.

"Bell done rung, Leon. You walk to school this morning?" Elmo said when I got close.

"Yeah."

"I seen Paddy and Strother come in. Thought you was sick again."

"I wasn't sick, Elmo."

"Figured you was laying out," Elmo grinned. He had little brown nubby teeth like a possum's. He banged his locker shut and we moved off down the hall. I was busting to tell him. "I heard about Bobby Rex," Elmo said.

Everybody knowed about Bobby Rex. It was like I'd come to school yesterday and spilt it all. Paddy had blabbed or maybe it was Pa down at the Texaco, but everybody knowed. I felt like I was getting in on the tail end of things cause the surprise had been wore off and everybody was pretty much happy with what they'd been told already and didn't need no more details. Elmo wanted to hear what Pa'd done about it, but that wasn't what I'd come to say.

After school Elmo said let's go to Hogan's for a Co-Cola, but I said no cause I figured it was best I stayed away from there after what Pa done that morning. I didn't know what he'd done, but I figured Hogan Royal would be remembered of it if I showed up. Elmo even said he'd treat me to a drink if I'd come with him, and that was hard to say no to. But I done it, and Elmo said I'd blowed my marbles and grinned with them teeth brown as a mouthful of pennies. We walked up to where Narrow Gauge Road run by the school, and Elmo took off walking toward Hogan's in the direction of town. I turned the other way for home.

I walked slow all the way. The sun burned hot on my shoulders and I wondered why I'd come this way since there wasn't no shade along the road. I thought about the wet fizz of a machine-cool Co-Cola washing down my throat and almost turned around to start for Hogan's. Then I heard a horn that sounded like hit duck, and it was Paddy and Strother Mottsinger pulling over for me. Strother mashed the brakes real quick so that the car left squealing smoky tracks as it slid up to where I had stopped. "Want a lift, Leon?" Strother asked.

"Reckon so." I jumped into the back seat, and Strother jerked off fore I had the door closed tight. I banged back hard against the seat. Paddy was sitting close-up to Strother with her arm looped casual round his shoulder. Between them I watched one of them rubber shrunk heads jiggling from the rearview. Paddy was sipping a Cheerwine and passed the bottle to Strother who swilled a big gulp down and wiped his stained mouth on the top of his sleeve. "You been to Hogan's?" I asked.

"Yea. Wanna sip?" Paddy asked, twisting round towards me.

"No thanks." She turned back in her seat and snugged up to Strother, tossing her head real prissy.

"Did he say anything to you?" I asked.

"Nope."

"Nothing at all?"

"What's he got to say to me?"

"Did he say Pa come this morning?"

"Hogan Royal didn't say nothing, Leon," Paddy said sharp. Then she laid her head on Strother's shoulder and sucked on the empty bottle with her tongue down inside.

Strother swung into our drive and bumped us right up to the front porch. "Thanks for the lift," I said and got out. Paddy was still sitting close-up to Strother, sucking on the bottle. Strother spit out the window and drawed a toothpick out of his shirt pocket and screwed it between his front teeth.

"It's all right, Leon," he nodded. I liked Strother, but he wasn't much for talking. Bobby Rex said it was cause he was shy and that was the reason he painted his car nigger pink. Cause he weren't noticed just for hisself. I went on up the front steps and inside.

Ma was scraping carrots in the kitchen. She looked up from the bowl when I come in. "Hi." I gave her a peck on the cheek and she smiled. "I get any mail, Ma?"

"No, Leon." She bent back over the carrots.

"Bobby Rex said he'd write me from Nashville."

She didn't say nothing. Her head hung low over the bowl and there was just the whipping sound of peels flopping to the side of her knife. Her face was gray in the dim kitchen light.

"Did I get a postcard or something, Ma?"

"He ain't had time to write yet, Leon."

"Guess so." I hadn't really hoped to get word so soon.

"Paddy home?"

"Yeah. Her and Strother give me a ride. They're outside."

"It's just as well," Ma said, putting her knife down. "I got some things need saying to you, Leon." Her face was long as an empty sack and her eyes sagged at the corners. She put them sad soft eyes on me and they pushed right down to my insides. "Sit down, Leon," she said. And then she told me how important it was that I listen to her cause she was right and she was afraid that lately alot of wrong things had been put in my head. She said she knowed I loved Bobby Rex and there was nothing wrong with that, but then she said how Bobby Rex wasn't

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no hero cause he'd let his family down and it would be wrong for me to think he was. She said Bobby Rex had his head rattled with dreams that would only bring him hurt cause they wouldn't come real, and it was wrong for him to fill my head with his private fancies. She said in her heart she knowed the Lord was frowning down on Bobby Rex this very minute and would more than likely punish him for running off by not letting him win the contest. "The Lord shows no mercy when a person flaunts theirself," she told me. "Pride is the blackest sin." Her face got pink as she talked and her voice growed firm till it was very loud, and I couldn't remember her ever being this way before. I figured it was the Lord giving her the strength to get it all out. "Do you understand, Leon? Do you?" She pushed her face close to mine, boring in with her eyes which had turned cold hard gray as b.b.'s. Looking down I said I did, careful not to meet them eyes of hers. But it seemed to me she and Pa had everything wrong. Seemed they was making a mountain out of a molehill. But I said I understood to her so she could go back scraping carrots, feeling calm and happy in her heart that she'd put the truth before me and I'd swallowed it. I saw a little smile crack the two tight lines of her mouth as she picked up her knife. "Tell Paddy to get in and set the dinner table, Leon."

I went back outside where Paddy and Strother was sitting in his car. Paddy was doctoring her mouth up with lipstick, and it made a greasy orange gash in her long white face. Strother was slumped against his side of the car, still poking his gums with the pick he'd pulled out earlier. Paddy heard me coming on the gravel and twisted her neck out the window. "What you want, Leon?" Her mouth crinkled up in a little o and hung bright in my eyes.

"Ma wants you in to set supper."

"I'm comin. Tell her I'll be there soon as I tell Strother bye."

"Okay." I wondered how long it took somebody to say good-bye.

4.

I didn't get brave enough to go up to the Esso till Thursday. Pa hadn't said nothing about seeing Hogan Royal, and I didn't ask. Pa hadn't said nothing about Bobby Rex since that first morning when he blared off, but it was brooding in him and showed itself in his eyes. I guessed he had got alot of it out of hisself by telling Hogan off.

Truth is I wouldn't of went up to the Esso at all except Elmo Rice kept badgering me and I was curious. I wanted to get home and read the postcard I knowed Bobby Rex had sent. All the way to Hogan's I kept wondering what it said. I figured Ma would've read it and Paddy, too, but it wouldn't matter cause it'd be mine. It'd have my name on the front cause Bobby Rex had said so.

Lots of kids dropped by Hogan's on the way home from school to buy a soda. It was closer than walking on into town to the drugstore, and Hogan had a machine with three choices. Sometimes they'd be so cold there'd be a long lump of yellow ice all the way down to suck on while the cold stream of sweet fizz flowed by on either side. Since Bobby Rex had come to work there, more kids came by. Pa said this, and it was true. Mostly kids Paddy's age and older. They all thought Bobby Rex was something and liked to hang around him. I reckon Bobby Rex had always been popular, even before he started singing in public. And he wasn't envied for it neither. He had a small handsome face like the Cisco Kid's I seen on Elmo Rice's t.v. and dimples and eyes dark as plums. The girls all said he had movie star looks. It didn't go to his head though. He took it natural and didn't make nothing big out of it. Some people with good looks liked to watch theirselves in mirrors, or passing by a big pane of window glass they might sneak a gander at theirselves kind of sly out of one eye. But Bobby Rex didn't do none of this. He was real private about hisself. I reckon he was popular for lots of reasons, the least of them being his face. But the thing that stood out clean as if it was tattooed all over him was his friendliness. It was honest, too, and not put on. He could get along with anybody. Doodle Esquire Washington, the nigger that worked up at Hogan's, said Bobby Rex had a special kind of *style*, and I guess that's what it was. Style. Doodle said some people had it running in them like blood, and it was magic. Doodle said it was the style that gave Bobby Rex his pretty face. He said a pretty face was like a Christmas tree light waiting to be turned on. The bulb by itself was okay, but when the light come on inside it, that made all the difference. That was style.

All the way to Hogan's I kept wondering what Hogan might say when I saw him. I knowed he'd be sore after what Pa had said, and I guessed he'd act unfriendly. Hogan Royal weren't no bad man like some of the fellas down at the Texaco liked to say. He'd lived in Orfax all his life, same as Pa. Fact, they'd growed up together. Then Hogan'd done a year off at some college in Georgia and Pa said that made a change for the worst in him. He'd always been a little queer with his ideas, Pa said, but after that year at college he wasn't never the same no more.

Pa said Hogan had come back to Orfax with some high-hat ideas of starting his own business with money he'd got when his old man died. But them was war years and cash was tight. So Hogan joined up with the army and wasn't seen again until the war was over. Pa said he'd come home from the war bragging and boasting about some award they give him for being a hero and getting hisself shot. And he still walked with a limp so I reckon he got hurt pretty bad. I seen the souvenir the army had give him for his trouble. He had it hung from a chain under the cash box at the station, and Bobby Rex said it was his good-luck charm. The purple ribbon it dangled from was nasty with grease spots from all the times Hogan's big oily black hands would finger it while he stood behind the counter. There was a little gold picture of General George Washington in the center of the medal, and every now and then Hogan would grin wide

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at Doodle and say, "Here's your daddy, now what do you think?" Doodle would rare back and show his fish-slick gums, and them chunky teeth white as icecubes would chew on his laugh.

Hogan had been to college and the war, and them things, Pa said, turned on him to make him different from most folks in Orfax. Made him think he was better and knowed it all. Pa said Hogan Royal'd learnt one thing in life and learnt it good, and it was how to swindle people. Pa said it mainly cause Hogan's prices was always a penny or so above the Texaco's. And since his station was on the main road to town and the Texaco was on a side road, strangers driving through who didn't know the difference would pull up at Hogan's and pay extra without batting an eye. Pa said Hogan probably needed the extra pennies to make up for the change Doodle Esquire was most likely pocketing on the sly. You sure couldn't trust a nigger round money, Pa said. But even if Hogan was getting hisself robbed, it was no reason to make folks who didn't know better pay extra.

Even though Hogan's prices was higher, it didn't stop local folks from buying from him. His station was big and new with three pumps he always kept fresh painted and little blue and red flags strung up all around, and he sold all kinds of tires, even for tractors, which is something the Texaco didn't. Pa had bought some recaps for the pickup but said they wasn't worth a hoot. Said Hogan had took him on the deal cause they blowed out the first week. Bobby Rex said it was just Pa talking cause the fellas at the Texaco was giving him a hard time about trading with Hogan. Anyhow, Hogan Royal had always been fine to me. And he usually offered me a Chiclet when I went by. I knowed for a fact he'd been fair with Bobby Rex.

It was just three long blocks to the station from school, and it was a nice day for walking. On the way Elmo asked me if I'd heard from Bobby Rex, and I said no, but that I was looking for a postcard to come that day. I told him I couldn't stay long at the station cause I wanted to get home and find out what Bobby Rex had to say. We was almost there, in fact we could see the little flags jerking in the wind like tied up birds when I heard a horn blast behind us and I seen Ma in the pickup. She pulled over to our side, and I ran around to her door.

"Where you going, Leon Mosley?" She had her head wound up in a dull wrinkled scarf and her face looked lumpy and dusty in the clean sharp light. She squinted at me with them saggy eyes like the daylight was too bright for her.

"Me and Elmo is going up to Hogan's."

"It's too near supper for a soda, Leon."

"I ain't going to buy no cola. I'm just going with Elmo to keep him company. I ain't been all week, Ma."

She sighed and looked beyond me down the road. Her face was stiff and crusty with powder.

"Please, Ma?" I begged, and I kissed her quick. It tasted like clay.

"Get in. I'll let you out there. I'm going in for some thread and I'll get you when I'm done." She looked straight ahead and her lips were tight and white as a scar.

"Hop in Elmo. Ma, did I get a postcard?"

"No. You ain't got no postcard." I felt it squeeze me when she said it. She said it so fast. Something caught at my gut and ran clean through me, and I looked at Ma's hard wooden face as she steered the truck back on the road again.

"You sure, Ma?"

"I been home all day, Leon."

"Postcards is little, Ma. Sometimes they get laid down flat in the box so you can't see them less you're looking for them. Are you sure you looked real good?"

"I'm sure." She pulled into the station and we got out.

I felt like I'd been wrung out, and I didn't feel like no Coke or seeing Hogan Royal, and I wished I'd rode on with Ma. I wished I hadn't counted on hearing from Bobby Rex so soon. After all, it was only Thursday. I shouldn't of got my hopes hung out so high. I knowed he was probably real busy and I'd hear the next day for sure. "Come on, Leon." Elmo was ahead of me, skipping toward the cola machine.

"I'm coming." I seen Hogan Royal just then. He was coming out the station door to meet a customer that had driven up. He seen me too, and we waved at the same time. He was a short fat man with a pile of curly hair the color of cedar shavings and a kind of orange fur on his arms and hands. It was strange how I felt when I seen him finally. I'd been scared of coming eye-to-eye with him after what Pa done cause I was afraid he'd be sore. But when I seen him, I felt good. I felt a part of Bobby Rex. It was like with Hogan there Bobby Rex couldn't be all that far away. I knowed Hogan was all for what Bobby Rex had done, and I was tired of being around folks who weren't.

"Whatcha want, Leon?"

"Huh?" Elmo already had hisself a drink and was blowing across the bottletop and making a hollow wind sound. "Nothing."

"Aw, come on Leon. Your Ma ain't going to find out."

"I ain't that thirsty. Sides, don't have time to drink a whole one."

"Have a sip of mine." I took the bottle and gulped a swallow down hard.

"Thanks."

"I'm going to get some goobers, too," Elmo said, and I followed him into the station house. It was bright inside and shiny clean. Green and gold oil cans was stacked like a metal Christmas tree in the wide front window. All over the wall there was shelves loaded with waxes and pastes and engine cleaners and juice to keep cars going when it got cold. There was a pinball machine in one corner of the room, and I seen two guys I knowed was old friends of Bobby Rex's hunched over it. They turned and grinned at me when I come in like they knowed me but couldn't remember how. Elmo went over to the glass case where the cashbox was and peered in at the candy. "Can't decide tween goobers or a Reesie cup," Elmo said. Just then Doodle Esquire Washington come in the side door

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from the garage, wiping the grit off his black fingers with a rag.

"How you doing, Leon?" He gave me an easy pat on the back and grinned with them chunky bright teeth. His sweaty face was shiny dark as a watermelon seed.

"Okay, Doodle."

"You ain't been here in a while, boy." Doodle went behind the case, still rubbing his fingers with the rag. "What you need, Elmo?"

"I'll take a box of goobers."

"What you know, Leon?" Doodle slid the box of candy across the countertop and took the nickle Elmo handed him and rung it up on the cashbox. "Say what, Leon?"

"Nothing much," I shrugged.

"You heard from the man?" Doodle smiled and his gums flashed like a quick pink light.

"Who?"

"Bobby Rex. He something, I tell you. That Bobby Rex sho is a tomcat."

"I ain't heard nothing," I said. The front door swung open and Hogan Royal came in.

" 'Lo, Elmo, Leon," he nodded and slapped a bill in Doodle's hand. "Make change for the lady in the white car, Doodle, and check her oil." He said it all in one breath, and Doodle went out. "Missed seeing you, Leon," he said, pulling out a cigarette from his chest pocket. "You been okay?"

"I reckon so." I thought to myself I'd been silly to be scared of Hogan Royal.

"Good . . . good." He drawed in the smoke and rolled the cigarette around in his fingers. "I seen your Pa this week. He come up, ah . . . I believe it was Tuesday. Yeah, it was Tuesday. Day after Bobby Rex left."

"I know." I looked at the floor.

"He don't take much to Bobby Rex's plan, does he?" Hogan Royal laughed sudden. It was a wheezie laugh like a choked engine.

"No, he don't. Ma neither." I felt my cheeks burn hot when I said it.

"What do you think about it, Leon?"

"I reckon I'm glad he done it," I said. The words come off my mouth easy and glad.

"Think he'll win the contest?"

"I hope so."

"I think he'll win," Hogan said in a proud voice.

I tried to swallow down the dryness in my throat. My hands was dripping sweat, but I got my nerves up and looked Hogan square in the eyes. "Did Pa act mad or anything when he come up Tuesday?" A smile run wide across Hogan's face like a pod splitting open.

"He was friendly enough, Leon. Why you ask?"

"Oh, I don't know," I looked down again. "Seems he's been mad at everthing and everybody since Bobby Rex took off."

"Nope. He come to look at tractor tires. Didn't find what he wanted, though. Didn't say nothing about Bobby Rex, except—" Hogan paused and dragged hard on his cigarette, his eyes squinty from the sting of the smoke. "Except as he was leaving, he asked me if I thought Bobby Rex was going to win the contest. I told him, yes, I thought Bobby Rex was a born winner."

"Then what'd he say?" I was looking Hogan square on now.

"Nothing. He said he had to go and would check back later about the tires."

I felt something crawling up and down my insides like a big laugh that wanted to push out. It wasn't no glad feeling though. I felt sad and guilty for Pa, and the laugh was on myself and Ma and Paddy cause we believed him. When I thought about Pa now, I seen the ragged dummy in the cornfield near school, and it scared me. I wished it were Hogan Royal who scared me. But it wasn't. It was Pa.

"By the way, I heard from Bobby Rex yesterday," Hogan said. The words jumped hard at me.

"You did?"

"Sure. Got the card right here." He fumbled under a pile of magazines on the countertop and pulled up a picture postcard and handed it to me. I looked at the picture of Davy Crockett on the front and the big yellow letters that splashed out HELLO FROM TENNESSEE: GREENEST STATE IN THE LAND OF THE FREE. I held the card in my hands, rubbing the glossy front with my thumb. I couldn't turn it over. I didn't want to turn it over. It was like holding a part of somebody I didn't know no more, somebody that belonged to other things and other folks than I did. And yet I didn't know who *I* belonged to anymore. I couldn't be certain if I belonged even to myself. My eyes burned into the proud face on the front of the card. It didn't really matter what was written on the other side. It wasn't meant to be said to me.

"What does he say?" Elmo asked, straining for a look at the card.

"Go on and read it, Leon," Hogan said in a kind voice.

"Naw, it's okay. I'll be getting my own card in a day or so," I said.

"Go on and read it, boy," Hogan said. "It's for you, too." I turned it over slow. It was Bobby Rex's handwriting alright. Black and stringy. It said:

Made it. This sure is a big city. Hope
things is fine at the station. Tell Doodle
Hi. Thanks for all you done. Bobby Rex
P.S. Tell Leon Hi if you see him.

I smiled and handed the card back to Hogan. He slid it under the magazines.

"There's your ma, Leon." Hogan pointed to the pick-up that had swung into the station.

"Come on, Elmo. We can drop you off," I said. I told Hogan goodbye, and Elmo and me went out. Doodle was washing the windshield of a big white car and waved to us as we passed. I kept thinking about the postcard and Pa coming up to buy tractor tires and I wished I weren't no part of it. The whole business made me sick and ashamed of myself.

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"Hey, did you see her?" Elmo whispered all of a sudden, cupping his hands to his mouth.

"See who?" I said with a tired, old voice.

"The lady in the white car. It's *her*."

"Who, Elmo?" I turned but I didn't see nobody I knowed.

"The lady who bought our crawdads. Remember? Last summer. The lady with them giant purple lips. I seen her in the car Doodle's with now. Look, Leon!"

"So what?" I said and climbed in the truck side of Ma.

5.

Things ain't been the same since Bobby Rex left. Not that they've got any worse or better. It's just that things is different, that's all. I guess if I had to say the reason it'd be that things slowed down some and voices got softer in the house. Pa's softer. He ain't interested in nothing lately except that big new colored t.v. set that he bought with the last money Bobby Rex sent. He says it gets a bunch of channels, and I reckon it's so cause after a half hour he can tell you whether or not the Yanks is going to win or how Muscles Mooney put the scissors on Weasil Roach or what the day's price on tobacco is. Ain't no one picture going to bring you all that. Pa don't let nobody mess with that big set. Ma comes in to dust, but he won't let her lay a finger on it. Says he'll do it hisself. Says he'll take *pride* in doing it hisself, but I ain't seen him dust it yet. I ain't ever seen the top cleared off since the day it come. He keeps it stacked with his t.v. guides and cartons of Luckies, and there's a picture of Dinah Shore he cut out of a magazine after he seen her on the set once. Pa eats his supper on a tray now so he can snatch the news, he says. He says t.v. brings the world to your front door so that the only reason to go anywhere anymore is to get food. He tells Ma they even got religion on t.v. Sunday mornings, right during church, so he don't have to get into his Sunday suit no more. Ma tells him she don't believe the Lord is no television star or ought to be and that Pa is just making excuses and being contrary to her wishes. Pa lets her say it, though, while a little smile peeps out of his lips. He's softer now, Pa is. Or maybe it's the way I seen him. Paddy's fixing to hitch up with Strother Mottsinger in June, but Pa don't say nothing. And I started work at the Esso after Hogan finally said I was old enough. Pa don't say much about that either. I reckon I should be glad, but all good things hurt a little.

A man from New York City come out to the house the other day to do some writing about Bobby Rex. He asked me could I pick guitar like Bobby Rex. I said, no, I couldn't sing neither. About the only thing like Bobby Rex I could do was pump gas at the Esso. It was funny how the man pinched in his face when I said it and his mossy eyebrows mashed down on his eyes like a furry finger. He wrote it down and left. I always hoped to see it in print but I ain't yet. □

JAY MEEK

THE FIRE-MAKER

First came the pigs with grog
then questions
next the hyenas eating hearts
of fathers and last
came night the blackbirds

bearing fire on their wings
the trees
shouted parade parade
but it passed
it flew into the desert

where a boy sat with two sticks
he rubbed together
like leg-bones
and dreamed he was running
from home

He dreamed the beginning
of everything
blackbirds sat on his fingers
and tried to steal
his hands he rubbed harder

even harder he turned
the desert around and around
until the eyes
of the death-dogs burned
and what he ever was

forgot its name
then out of the sticks came
son the fire
eating its father its mother
and everything was gone

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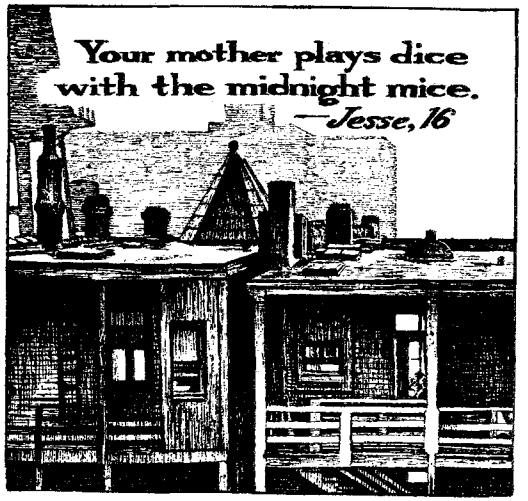

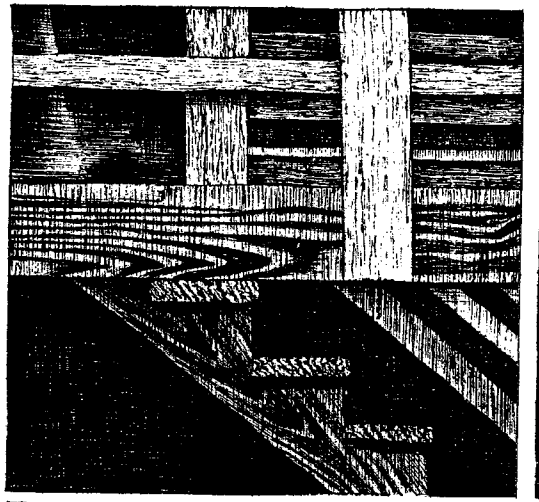

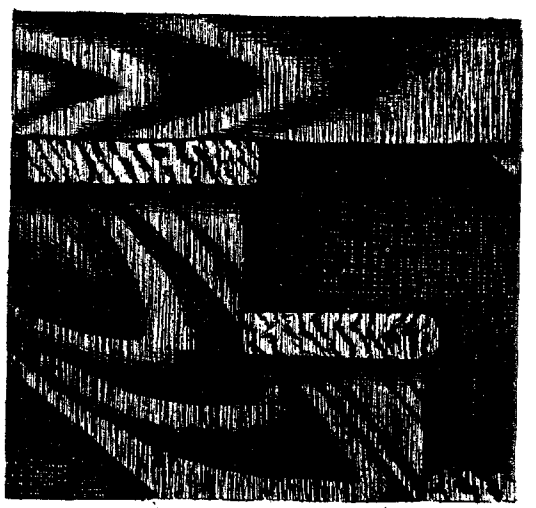

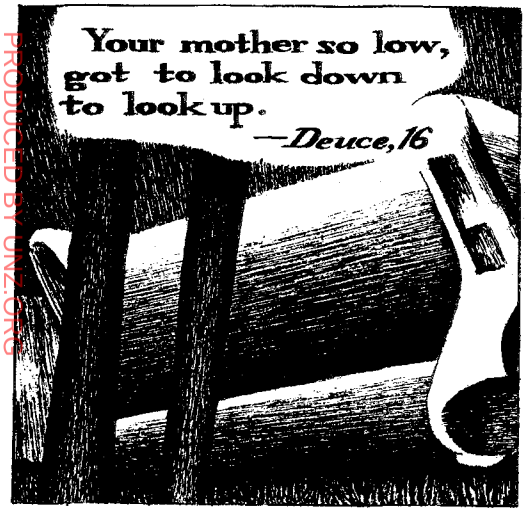

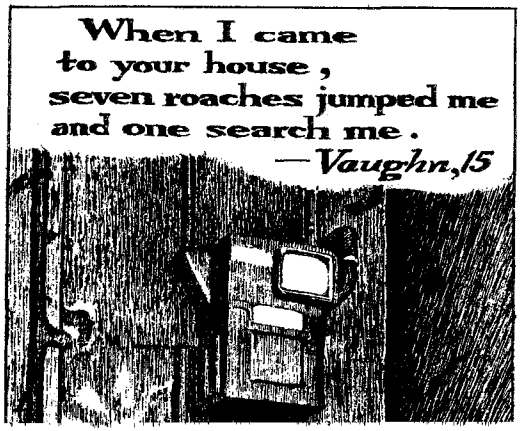

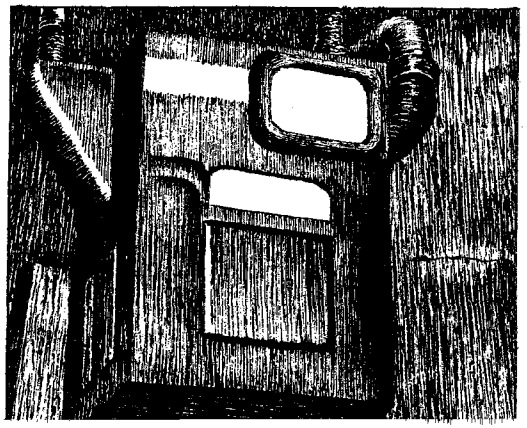

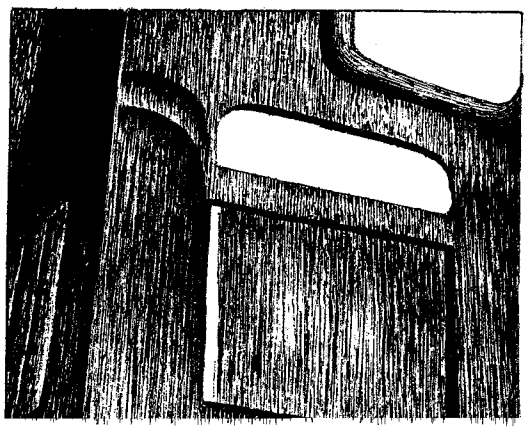

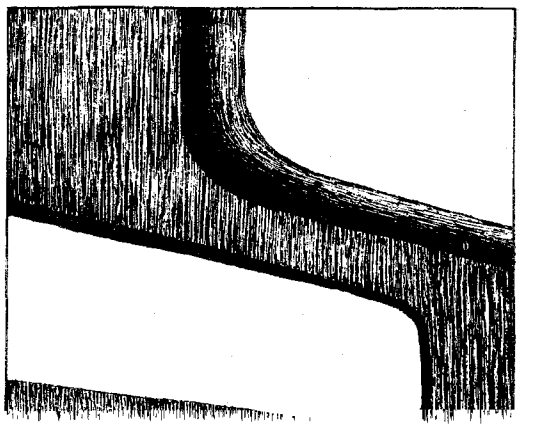

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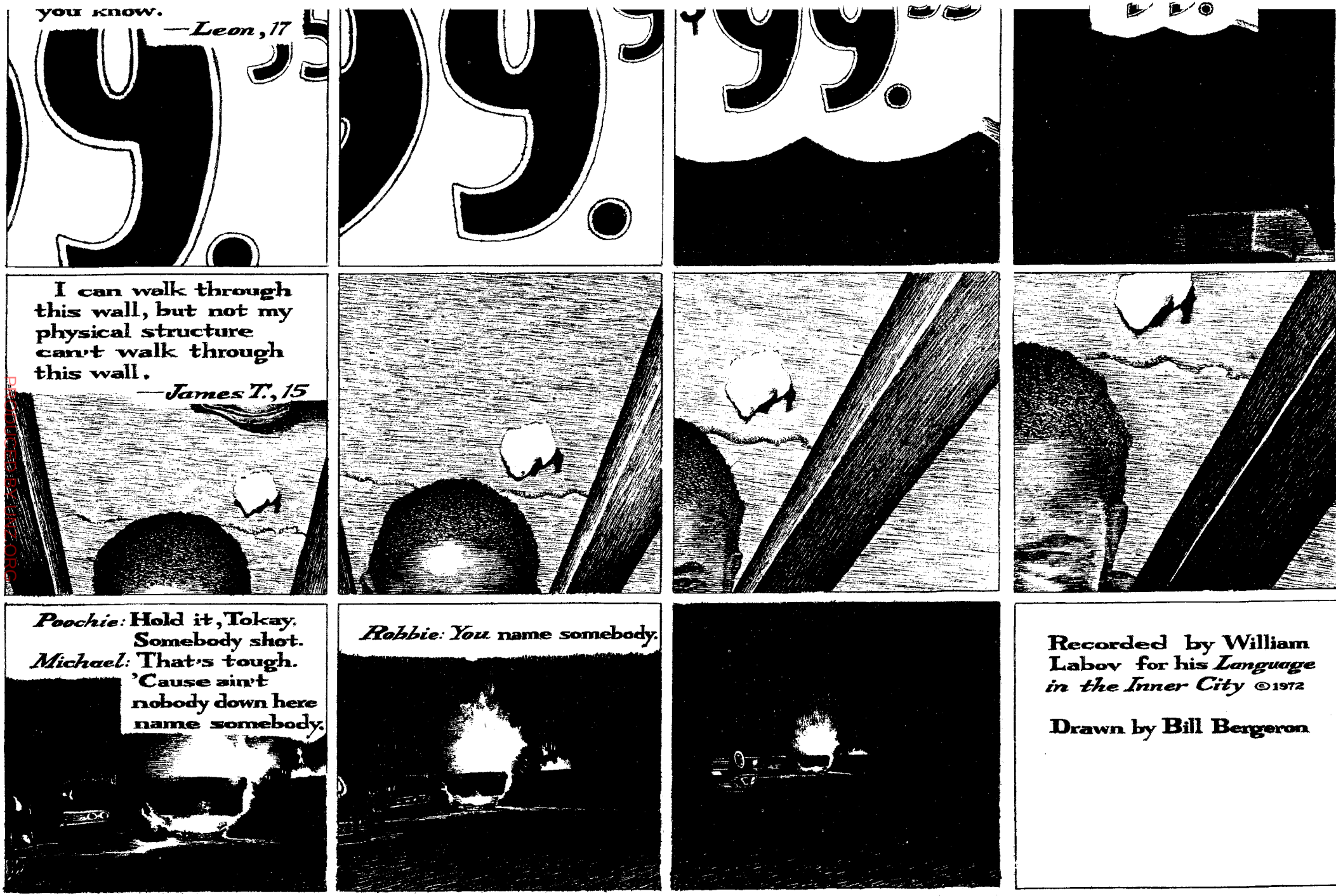
you know.
—Leon, 17
I can walk through this wall, but not my physical structure can't walk through this wall.
—James T., 15
Poochie: Hold it, Tokay. Somebody shot.
Michael: That's tough. 'Cause ain't nobody down here name somebody.
Robbie: You name somebody.
Recorded by William Labov for his Language in the Inner City ©1972
Drawn by Bill Bergeron

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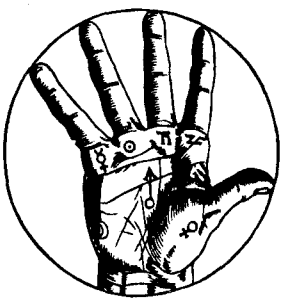

CATHERINE PETROSKI lives in Austin, Texas, and has published other fiction in FIDDLEHEAD *and* VIRGINIA QUARTERLY.

LINES

A Story by Catherine Petroski

WHAT DWINDLING SIGNIFICANCE IN THESE LINES it is foolish to hold these beliefs in a post-Einsteinian universe. Space is curved. The absolute line is of little consequence. No one in his right mind believes in palmistry. It is a foolish and archaic art. Nothing to be believed in. Believe me.

HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT THE HANDS ARE DIFFERENT but this has its own elements of being dangerous. I cannot trust my ability to function to this kind of belief. Cannot enter a covenant with the dark art of heart lines and head lines and featherings and such. Cannot allow myself to be deluded, permit others to say things that will erase whole days at a time, enfeeble my ability to get supper to the table, to keep the living room straight, the ring out of the tub, little though those things really mean to me. By its own definition the system warns of these things' triviality, weighed against the verities we may uncover.

SOMEONE TOLD ME IT WAS A RECESSIVE TRAIT however, I continue, I doubt that the woman is an Indian. I almost know that she is not. I wouldn't however assert my beliefs, to her or anyone else. She is illegal. She surely has dangerous friends, because most illegal people do not put up swirly neon signs that hum in the night, advertising themselves. And most illegal people, the myth goes, don't have the acumen, or whatever you call it, to advertise in the space above the signal cord in buses on precisely those lines which will carry most of her prospects, and most illegal people don't moreover have a pad of circulars attached to such an advertisement, with the words above them:

TAKE ONE in theory, a well-educated person, not a likely prey for such creatures or such games, and I do not ride the crosstown bus that brings the black maids to the west side at 7:30 and 8:30 and takes them home at 2:30, 3:30, or 4:30, depending on I don't know what. Since I am unknowledgeable in even those matters, I take solace in the fact that the Monarch butterflies have come; today I have seen two or three feeding from the purple lantana. Because this is the only satisfactory way I can combat the hostile forces, I have cultivated this ability to pull out of my body and let myself drift toward my real other self. But there come times when even that does no good, too many questions unanswered, all the wise philosophy no comfort. Definitions are brittle shells that nothing really fits into. History is irrelevant. The anomalies terrify. *She* knows what all that is, she knows how people get that way, how to get people back from that awful place, how to find the thread and hand it to you and say, here, go on from here.

YOU SEE YOUR LIFE through every book I can find on the subject. Nothing. I do not think everything about hands has been put into print. They are withholding vital information, keeping something for themselves, for the high priests, the core, the heart of the mystery. And why not? With mysteries, has it not always been so?

NO PROBLEM TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL from my left hand is uncertain, possibly disastrous. To be honest, I do not know how seriously to take this other woman I have consulted. I felt no rapport with her. I think she may have been high on something when I was there. She read from my left hand. *She*, the Indian with the neon sign, reads from my right hand. In some books which show which lines are which, the right hand is shown, in some, the left. I would say more often the right hand than the left. That would, in my case, be a good indication.

TWO CHILDREN TWO LINES children in my life. That is right. There *are* two lines on the edge of my hand just below the crease for my little finger. Either hand, the same. But I will not contemplate the further implications. One is strong, the other is a weak line. It is the qualitative that frightens. My very long thumb, for example. Is it a sign of intuition? Or the inability to reason.

WHO TOLD YOU YOUR GRANDMA SMOKED A PIPE asked,

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the percentages become fuzzy, the family lineage is purposely obscured. The keeper of the truth, or the person I have been taught to regard as the keeper of the truth, refuses to cooperate. There is, to her mind, the stigma: there is something shameful about whoever it was back in the North Carolina hills full of mist and turning roads and great sagging bellied bitch hounds, that whatever his name was took a squaw. There are laws. It is no joking matter. Was the real truth that it was her mother? No never. Her grandmother, then? No never. Great grandmother? No never. What then? I don't know, somewheres back there. One quarter. One eighth. One sixteenth. One thirtysecond. One sixtyfourth. One little two little three little four little five little six little seven little eight little nine little ten little.

INDIAN won't tell anyone how she gets rid of the warts. It has something to do with her hydrangeas, I think. She looks at the hand, the wart on the index finger, the pointer, the leader of my right hand and she says to herself, it will go straight-away. Not to me. Not to the wart. To herself. It is a dull, silly little wart, but it hurts me to play the piano with it. And the others at school always want to look at it, and be repulsed.

STEP RIGHT UP LADIES AND GENTLEMEN name is Loula Jean Phillips and she is from Arkansas and she is a girl in my fourth grade. She talks funny and is never smart in class so we make fun of her a lot. She never knows the arithmetic answers. She can't spell. She is, all in all, what you would call dumb. But Loula Jean has a cachet. Loula Jean claims she has eleven fingers. Loula Jean has, growing from the outside of the little finger of her left hand, a protuberance, unexplained. It doesn't look like a wart, it doesn't have erosions in it like my wart does; it is smooth indeed. And during recess when we all get together in the house of bushes along the railroad track with the throne bush and the secret door bush and the dungeon bush and all, when we're all there, Loula Jean is allowed to come in even though she is dumb. She has an extra finger, which she calls a fanger, and she claims the doctor says that by next year it will have a nail. We have never seen Loula Jean's bare feet.

SO MUCH FOR THE SUBJECTS OF FROGS AND PRINCES Mother Cherokee can cure warts as easily as she breathes but the deformations of the soul, the troubled heart are her specialties. Mother Cherokee knows all, sees all, understands all. Take one.

FINALLY YOU KNOW THE TWAIN SHALL MEET. AMEN was the end of my wart; my pianist's career was assured, mental health forever a certainty. All because of a blue hydrangea that turned pink. But I'm not sure that's all there was to it, and I suspect that was a diversionary ruse. What unknown else was there of nails in pork fat and rags and robin's eggs?

QUESTION many answers to problems, my dear, the wise old woman said. You must let each day come as it will and take each day as it comes. You must not fret about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Just remember still water runs deep. Waste not, want not. An idle brain is the devil's workshop. Keep all these sayings in your heart, my dear. Proverbs are linear. Euclid had an extra finger.

HOWEVER so smart, why does the hummingbird not fall? Wherefore does the ivy seek the dark? What secrets lie unsuspected inside the dogwood's flower, the stigmata caused when the bud at last opens? Inside the acorn is the chaos. Speak to me.

A BARKING DOG CANNOT SPEAK pulls out the bottle of medicine and takes a satisfying drink. She begins a parable. Mother Cherokee's story is about her brother. She is not, she points out, her brother's keeper, nor he hers. Her brother sits in front of one of several Indian trading posts in and around Cherokee, North Carolina, and raises his hand in a gesture of How to the passing white man. I tell Mother Cherokee it is possible that I have seen her brother, that I have seen such a man, a small withered Indian. Yes, Mother Cherokee exclaims, this is a good omen. We have been drawn together thus.

I ASK YOU AGAIN WHICH HAND go by the left hand things will darken soon and suddenly, like clouds in time-lapse sweeping the sky to darkness in instants. The line feathers. Then there is nothing. That is the hand sinister. The warning.

I SEE A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE, RELATIVELY what point does the language break? At what point does the head burst for lack of storage space? At what point does one tell the sorry truth about the undusted corners of one's mind, or is that always under the prohibition from the earliest days of our language: now this is something just in our family. The line.

IF YOU SHOULD LIVE SO LONG surprises me by raising her Indian's eyebrows. They are sparse and the hair is very short and lies very close to the skin and they are widely, flatly shaped to surprised peaks, a shadow on a full gold afternoon, and raising her eyebrows she fixes me with her eye and asks me, in your heart of hearts, do you believe Milton was a Manichean? And because I am only myself, not a Loula Jean who lands on her feet and not a clever grandmother and not, oh not a Mother Cherokee, I have no answer and tremble at the implications of her question, with reference to the assymtery of my palms.

ASPHALT ALL THE FIELDS OF DAFFODILS, COVER MY PALMS WITH FORMICA study the growling dog, the hissing cat. I study the two-faced Van Gogh? Cezanne? Matisse? in the St. Louis City Art Museum. Study the sturm und drang, the big and little, the here and there, the all in all. The Brooklyn Bridge and the Battery Tunnel, the rock outcroppings of Central Park and the sand of Galveston Island, the purple desert mountains of Mexico and the flat khaki plain of the Mississippi. The people, the artists and the ambitious men, the bored women and those whose boredom is in work and those whose work is in boredom, the quiet people and the loud, the near people and the far, the always people and the never. There will be celebration at the meeting point.

AND MY EYES WITH ALUMINUM squirrel is an expert acrobat. There are eight lines all leading all through the middle of this block, some telephone, some plain electricity. The squirrel has chosen as his own the main electric

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line. Here the squirrel does his dance above the waiting jaws of the cat. The cat is a bastard. He combines all the worst traits of adult humans with all the worst traits of child humans with all the worst traits of the wild animals, but he had a difficult childhood: an undetected case of roundworms. The cause is obscure, but the result is a bastard of unimaginable cunning and vindictiveness. One day the dancing squirrel will miss a step and make a meal for the bastard. It hasn't happened yet, which infuriates the cat, makes him all the more determined to wait the squirrel out. The squirrel's risk is calculated. Apparently he thinks it's worth it. Cats such as this deserve to be infuriated, and more. The day that the squirrel does fall, and one day when he is perhaps old and feeble, he will fall, I will not be able to verify his thirty-two feet per second per second. I will cover my eyes.

TELL ME MY DEAR OF YOUR ANCESTRY. IS THERE ANY INDIAN BLOOD hell. August in Illinois in a woods full of mosquitoes and singing gnats and humidity. Somewhere there was a squirrel, he heard it, clucking inside itself. I was along to watch. No gun. I loved the guns, the twelve oiled and polished beauties in racks lining his study. Beautiful stocks, depths undreamed of. He cradled the 12-gauge Browning in the crook of his left arm and glared at me. He had a way of glaring that wasn't always a glare; part of it was because of the miscasting of his teeth into a jagged row, part of it was the shock of finding pale blue eyes in the dark face. But this time it was a glare. I was scaring away the squirrels. I was a nuisance in the woods and would never be brought again. I tried to occupy myself. Searching out mosses on the woods' floor. Speculating on the little creek's destination. Studying the insects' paths, tracing the radii of a web. You see him, he said. No, I said. Right there, he said. I still didn't see him. There, he said. Oh, I said, not seeing him, why don't you shoot. Too far away, he said, not a good shot. Oh, I said. You're not much help, he said. Just be quiet, he said, and sit still; maybe he'll come this way, he said. The squirrel disappeared among the hands of the oak leaves, and never came back. The afternoon split wide open.

THE FORCE THAT BLASTS THE ROOTS OF TREES IS MY DESTROYER Who nonny nonny no. Madame Cherokee knows the refrains of Elizabethan mad songs. I study the lady, suspecting she may be A.M. Oxon. or Ph.D. Radcliffe; I search her bookshelves for a clue of who she might really be. When I asked about the dissimilarity of my two life-lines and point-blank which was to be believed, Mother Cherokee answered with an incantation. It is becoming difficult to tell where Mother Cherokee lets off and where all time and all people begin. Mother Cherokee becomes the keeper of the earth, the mother earth, the earth mother, though I do not rationally know what an earth mother is, just as I do not rationally believe anyone else can provide a rational definition of an earth mother, though there is much speculation on these matters, much bantering around of terms, much dependence on atrophied instincts. Mother Cherokee has begun to decorate her salon with golden boughs and mistletoe, with totems and straw men and special stones, and she is growing both more and less helpful.

SING HEAVENLY MUSE Cherokee riffles the pages of a book I cannot see, comes across a line she likes, follows it a bit with a swaying finger, lights her pipe, and hums. I have noticed there are very few deliberate hums in this world, and it is possible that Mother Cherokee's hum, owing to Mother Cherokee's own uniqueness, is a calculated and purposeful kind of humming noise, only giving the semblance of distraction, like perhaps some of us in all we do, and that beyond the chaos of appearances there is a comprehension and order bursting to emerge and the absent humming, whatever its form, is indeed a ruse. All nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres.

AND MARY KEPT ALL THESE SAYINGS IN HER HEART/ THE INSIDE, EAR ménage à trois in this yard, not counting the population of squirrels. Predators only. I am speaking of the original three-body problem involving the bastard cat, above, who lies with his massive head commanding the stone wall that is the property line, the skull settled back in its socket, the side ruffs all big and impressive, the eyes at most one-third open, the forepaws straight out, the hind legs casually swung to one side, the tom. It involves the neutered male who is the crazed tom's daily victim, who screams loud protests when the tom comes near and knows the foresmell of pain, abscessed wounds, fallen fur, tearing claws and insane teeth. It involves the bitch of a queen who lolled one day under our barbeque table, flipping her tail to one side and then the other until the bastard tom clamped her on the neck with the only authority she would recognize, and who now grows large under the delusion that not just the barbeque table but the entire patio is hers alone and who with the slightest provocation throws her confused calico body into sable-like projection. The tom, the neuter, the queen: they obliterate, for themselves, all time, all other places and things. The immediate is immediate.

COMPLETE SPIRITUAL ADVISOR ultimate question being the first. What about these two hands, woman? Would it give you a clue to the handedness of the universe to know that this morning when trying to open a stuck window in the bathroom I simultaneously (yes actually simultaneously though I know the odds against this are what? a googolplex to one) anyway simultaneously activated both my funnybones! This should not be wasted; it must mean something. Since, on closer inspection of my left hand I have discovered a heretofore unknown tiny line going from what I believed to be the end of my life-line to a great wildly feathered complex of twenty-three various lines, maybe I will, since this wild confused feather curves around the edge of my hand, in fact have a phenomenally long life, one of the longest, though unquestionably mad at the end, from, say, about two-thirds of the way through. A possibility, a hope, something to be considered at least. So I will consider it in a proper non-Euclidean perspective. Understandably, that cannot be the only possibility. For the line on the right hand is so beautiful. Beautiful, clean, strong.

YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED. TAKE ONE. FREE. □

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A Story by Jon Hassler

Nancy Clancy's Nephew

Water sparkled so bright in the street that George Post, sitting by the window, couldn't keep his mind on the morning paper. Snowbanks diminished before his eyes, uncovering patches of brown grass, and the old red oak in the front yard, having hung on to its leaves through fierce winter winds, released them now to a puff of warm air from the south.

"I'm going to see Nancy Clancy," he called from his chair.

This winter had been the worst of the seventy-five George Post could remember. Day after day the north wind had sucked a small, stinging snow out of a sky so hopelessly gray that the neighborhood cats, even the pretty ones, put on shaggy, dull coats and the family dog was content to lie for hours on rugs, moving only his eyes and the end of his tail. It seemed to George Post that the only break in the overcast had been the bitter stretch in January when the air itself froze and he couldn't see across the street through the icy haze until the sun burned through at noon and raised the temperature to 25-below. For sixty days he had been confined to the house. He had lost his patience early, and then he lost his impatience, reconciling himself to a daily schedule reduced to three activities: he smoked his pipe; he ate the meals his daughter, Mrs. Mullen, prepared for him; he read the morning paper, forgetting each paragraph as he went on to the next. His days became so simple and shadowless that he couldn't remember one from another, and it wasn't until this morning's sudden thaw that he remembered Nancy Clancy. Old plans, set aside as impossible in December, were worth considering again.

"I'm going to see Nancy Clancy," he said, his voice rumbling with phlegm.

Into the living room came his daughter, wiping her hands on her apron. She was sixty and married to a salesman named Mullen, who was seldom home. "What now?" she said.

"I'm going to see Nancy Clancy."

"What possessed you to think of Nancy Clancy?" Mrs. Mullen's hair, dyed so black it looked blue, was up in curlers.

"We used to visit her every so often."

"Who did?"

"My brothers and I. My cousins. You did yourself when you were a youngster."

Mrs. Mullen started back to the kitchen.

"Mind you, I'm going to see her," said George Post.

"All right. We'll plan a day."

"This afternoon," he said. "I'm going after lunch." When he saw her turn to look at him, he took his pipe from the pocket of his vest and examined the crusty bowl.

"I'm shopping this afternoon," she said. "I haven't time for visiting."

"I'll take the bus."

"Don't be silly."

"I'll take the bus."

"The bus stops four blocks from here and six blocks from Nancy's apartment. You're not up to it. You haven't been out all winter." She spoke as though he were hard of hearing.

George Post blew into the stem of his pipe until spit bubbled in the bowl.

"Oh, all right," said Mrs. Mullen. "I'll drop you at her apartment and pick you up on my way home. But make up your mind to be there a while. I'm after a spring coat and can't be hurried. And I'm meeting Florence Becker. She's looking for a coat too."

After lunch it took Mrs. Mullen fifteen minutes to transfer her father from his chair to the car. When they got as far as the front hall, Mrs. Mullen said, "You don't need your overcoat. It's a spring day."

"Tut," said George Post. He buttoned his vest and put on his suitcoat and carefully crossed his white scarf over his throat and struggled into his black overcoat while Mrs. Mullen stood holding his gloves, his hat, and his cane. She thought, without fondness, of the winters when her children were small and of the trouble it was to dress them to go out.

JON HASSLER teaches at Brainerd (Minnesota) Community College. "At middle age," he says, "I'm a beginning writer." His first story appeared in PRAIRIE SCHOONER, *his second in* FOUR QUARTERS.

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Without help, George Post shuffled through a puddle of melting ice on the front sidewalk, moving each foot an inch at a time and leaning heavily on his rubber-tipped cane. Halfway through the puddle he stopped to survey the distance he had come and, turning, he nearly lost his balance. Mrs. Mullen offered her hand but he pulled his elbow away and resumed his shuffle.

Never before had he found it necessary to bend himself to fit a bucket seat. As Mrs. Mullen held the door open for him, he stood at the curb studying the seat. It was too low. If he hadn't come so far, he would have turned back. Finally, closing his eyes, he fell into the car and dragged his cane and his legs in after him. Mrs. Mullen slammed the door and hurried around to the driver's side. The car was small and orange and it tilted when she got in.

"See if you can find out her age, at least," she said, tidying her hair in the mirror. "For all the trouble we're going to, you ought to come out of it with something." She started the car with a roar and set out across the city.

George Post was the last family survivor of his generation and Nancy Clancy was his aunt. Her age was a mystery, but she was thought to be near one hundred. From her apartment, into which she had been crammed with a surplus of household goods after her last brother died, she kept track, by letter, of a dozen branches of the family and she emerged for holiday dinners, at which she was not loved but admired like an heirloom and always delivered home earlier than she wished to be. It was to Nancy Clancy that births, weddings and deaths were first announced.

Mrs. Mullen drove with a heavy foot. Downtown she nearly collided with a bus and on a residential street she would have hit a man on a bicycle if he hadn't steered himself into a driveway, where he tipped over in a pool of slush. Both times she glanced at her father and assured herself that he hadn't noticed. He noticed, but he said nothing.

"What possessed you to think of Nancy Clancy?" she said. "You've never been one to pay calls."

"It's March," said George Post.

She parked in front of a stone apartment building and said, "Find out if she's a hundred." She reached across her father and opened his door, then she steadied him as he got to his feet. When he stood free of the car she said, "I'll be back at five and you be down. I don't want to climb those godawful stairs. Don't leave your gloves or your hat up there." Racing the engine as she shifted gears, she shot away from the curb so that the open door closed itself.

Teetering at the curb, George Post found himself between a snowbank and a small boy who, like himself, was bundled up for winter.

"Was that your mother?" asked the boy.

"No," said George Post. As a rule he ignored children, but this one struck his fancy because he spoke so clearly for his size. He stood no higher than George Post's cane.

The boy walked at his side to the entrance of the building and asked, "Do you live here?"

"No."

"Who lives here?"

"Nancy Clancy."

"Who's that?"

George Post stopped and pointed his cane at a third-floor window. "She lives up there and she's a hundred."

"A hundred years *old?*"

George Post climbed the two steps to the heavy front door and pushed it open.

"Some turtles are a hundred," the boy said as he watched the heavy door swing shut.

There was no elevator in the building and George Post paused with both feet on each step, like a pilgrim approaching a shrine. Halfway up the second flight he felt giddy. A fountain seemed to be rising up his spine and bubbling in his brain, a sensation like the one he was allowed on Christmas afternoons when red wine was in good supply. He hooked his cane over his arm and gripped the bannister with both hands. The fountain gradually subsided, but it sprang to life again when he took the next step. Several minutes passed before he reached the top step, where he leaned against the wall, tense and queasy. He felt as though he had outdistanced some vital part of himself — his lungs, his soul — and he was waiting for it to catch up. His right foot was asleep and he poked it with his cane.

In the dark hall a scrap of paper was taped to the first door he came to, and on it was shakily printed *Miss N. Clancy*. Through the door came the sound of a piano, a jangling combination of treble keys which he interrupted with a loud rap.

"Who is it?" called a thin voice.

"George." He took off his hat.

"Who?"

"George Post. Your nephew George."

The door opened and there stood Nancy, short and wrinkled and skinny as a stick, with her cheek out to be kissed. Her thick glasses were ice blue.

"Glory be," she said as he pecked her cheek. A faded blue dress hung down to her high black shoes and a flimsy dustcap hung over one ear. The weightless hand she offered him felt like five cold twigs.

He was about to tell her she was looking younger all the time, but she seemed alert enough to know better. "You look just the same," he said.

"Of course I do. You reach a point when it's impossible to look any older. Sit down. I was scrubbing my piano keys." She snatched a rag and a can of Bon Ami off the piano stool and disappeared into her kitchen. She was quicker than George Post remembered her.

He slowly removed his gloves and overcoat and lowered himself into a velvet chair by the piano. He set a crystal ashtray on his lap and rapped it with his pipe. The ashtray broke in half. He studied the ranks of fading photographs on the piano, the men choked into high stiff collars and the ladies in plumed hats. Each face wore a serious expression and the men looked as substantial as bankers, even the young ones, but they were fading all the same.

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"The surprise of my life, seeing you, George," said Nancy, returning with a letter in her hand and settling lightly on the center cushion of her davenport. It dipped only slightly, like a bough under a bird. She had removed her dustcap and George Post saw that her hair, like her piano keys, had gone from white to yellow.

"I'm here till five," he said. "Margaret's coming by at five." He reached to a coffee table and exchanged the two halves of the crystal ashtray for a brass bowl.

"It's been thirty years since you paid me a call."

"Fiddlesticks. I helped you move into this apartment."

"That's not paying a call, George. I mean a proper call."

"Well, here I am. Till five." He beat the bowl with his pipe.

When the ringing died away Nancy said, "Did you hear Gertrude passed on?" He nodded. "Trudy she called herself after she moved to Oregon. Now all my nieces and nephews are dead, George, except you."

He had serious blockage in his pipe, and he was turning red trying to blow through the stem. "You never had much to do with Gertrude anyway," he said finally. "None of us did."

"Makes no difference. At least she was *there*. Here is her last letter to me." Nancy slipped a page out of the envelope and offered it to him but he waved it away.

"She's buried in the West," he said.

"Glory be, is that any reason for not reading her last words? Did you leave your glasses home?"

"What glasses? I don't wear glasses any more." He was still busy with his pipe. "My sight is improving with age. Coming over here with Margaret, I read the numbers on moving boxcars. I haven't worn glasses for ten years."

"Well, it's nothing to get uppity about," said Nancy. "The eyesight in our family has never been remarkable."

"Except mine. Mine is remarkable." He set his plugged pipe on the coffee table. "It was your brother Len that had the worst eyesight I ever saw short of a blind man. He tied a white handkerchief to the steering wheel of his E M F. Now don't deny it."

"My stars, why should I deny it? That was the way he drove to town and back, with the handkerchief tied to the top of the steering wheel. That way he could tell if he was steering straight ahead. The road wasn't plain to him, but the handkerchief was."

"One day I was driving my Overland out north of Pinburg," said George Post, pointing into the kitchen as though Pinburg were behind the refrigerator, "and I looked around and there was Uncle Len in his E M F coming up behind me faster than blazes. He was trying to catch up to me and he was laying a dust cloud over the land." He began to chuckle. "That was his way. Catch up behind somebody he could see and follow him into town. You know how the road makes a jog around that big rock pile north of Pinburg. Well, I turned left to follow the road and Len lost sight of me and thought the rock pile was the back end of my Overland. He drove straight into the rock pile."

His laugh was silent, but it grew until it shook him like a convulsion. He rolled his head helplessly and bared his bad teeth. Then he squirmed around in his chair and pulled a handkerchief out of his back pocket to mop his tears.

"Wasn't it the Model-A he drove into the rock pile?" said Nancy. "Or was it the Studebaker?"

"It was the E M F," said George Post, recovering. "Every Morning Fix'em."

"It's a wonder he wasn't killed that time."

"The ditch slowed him down. It was a sandy ditch."

"But it was the E M F he died in."

"Yes, it was the E M F he died in." George Post shook again with mirth. "He took Harold McGivern's best team with him, too. He was east of Pinburg that time. Nobody knew what he was doing east of Pinburg. His place was north. He caught sight of Harold McGivern's team and wagon and he raced down the road like blazes to catch up with it. Only trouble was —" He laughed silently, then said from behind his handkerchief, "Only trouble was Harold McGivern was coming instead of going."

Nancy folded her arms, not amused.

With a sudden sober expression, George Post struggled out of his chair, the brass bowl falling from his lap.

"Where's the bathroom?"

"Through the kitchen," said Nancy, pointing.

"Harold McGivern jumped clear, but Uncle Len and the team hit head-on and tangled up and died," said George Post, shuffling into the kitchen with wet pants.

"The door by the range," Nancy called after him.

The phone rang, and on her way to answer it Nancy replaced the brass bowl on the table and smoothed the doilies on the arms of the velvet chair.

It was Mrs. Mullen calling.

"I dropped Dad off at your place. Did he get upstairs all right?"

"Yes, he's here. My, he's failed."

"I just wanted to say I'll stop back at five."

"Five will be fine. We were just talking about Leonard."

"Who?"

"My brother Leonard. It will be forty years ago August that he died in the accident."

"I won't have time to run up to the apartment, Nancy. I would like you to send him down at five."

"And you know, Margaret, it will be fourteen years next week that Wilfred, the last of my brothers, died and I said to myself, 'Nancy, you're next. The Lord has taken the boys first and one of these days He'll be tapping you on the shoulder.' But He never did. The next thing I knew He was picking and choosing among the next generation younger than me. In fourteen years now I've seen eight nieces and nephews called, one by one, and I've been there in my black hat to see most of them blessed and buried."

"Five o'clock then."

"And from the looks of George Post I expect to be in the mourners' pew at least once more. I knew the min-

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ute I opened the door and looked him in the eye. I could tell by his color."

"He had a spell in January, but he's better now."

"He's the color of chalk. And he's losing control of his bodily functions."

"Five o'clock then. Don't let him forget his hat and gloves."

"He's my last nephew, Margaret. George Post is all that's left between my generation and yours. He's my last bridge."

"And his scarf. And take care of yourself, Nancy."

"It's not myself I'm —"

"Goodbye then."

"And his sense of humor isn't what it was," Nancy said to the dial tone.

She hung up and took the broken crystal ashtray to the kitchen. She dropped it into a garbage sack and reached to a high shelf for two flowered teacups.

George Post and Nancy had tea in the kitchen and disagreed about the date when Nancy had moved into the apartment.

"It was the fall of fifty," said George Post, "because we called on three darkies to move the piano and I gave them each a dollar."

"The fall of fifty I was in Chicago visiting Viola."

"It had to be the fall of fifty because you said, 'Pay the darkies and I'll pay you back' and I gave them each a dollar and you never paid me back. I've been out three dollars since the fall of fifty." He scooped three spoons of sugar into his tea.

"We called on one colored to help with the piano, not three." Trying to speak forcefully, Nancy's voice cracked. "Back then there weren't three colored in the entire city. And you gave him three dollars and I paid you back later in the day."

They fell silent. Nancy reached into a covered dish and drew out a prune. George Post looked out the kitchen window. A sharp breeze rippled the puddles in the alley, but they did not sparkle. Clouds had moved over the city and it looked wintry again.

After tea, Nancy brought her photograph album to the kitchen and served it to George Post like a plate of food. She carefully opened the velvet cover and pulled her chair closer as he squinted at a picture in which his father was a boy and Nancy was a baby. They were among a group of picnickers in bonnets and suspenders.

"That was out in Uncle Len's pasture by the creek," said George Post. "I remember it was the day Doc Anderson went by in his buggy and it wasn't till later we heard Hilda Vanderveer had triplets. There's me and my sister. Just youngsters."

"That's not you. That's your father," said Nancy. And that baby girl is me. It shows the family twenty years before you were born." Nancy smoothed down the tattered black page. "It's the first picture in our family ever. And I'm in it."

"That's me as a youngster, Nancy," George Post insisted, uncurling his little finger and pressing it on the boy in the photograph. "And my sister by my side."

"Can't you understand? That baby girl is me and I'm older than you. I'm older than you, George, by more than a little." Nancy spit a prune pit into her hand.

"If it wasn't the day of Hilda Vanderveer's triplets, what was Doc Anderson doing going by?"

"George, this wasn't the day Doctor Anderson went by. You're thinking of another day. This was before Doctor Anderson ever set up practice in Pinburg."

"Who's this, then?" asked George Post, quickly turning the page. "It looks like Uncle Sherman in his overalls."

Nancy moved in for a closer look. "That's who it is."

"See? What did I tell you? And his dog."

"Yes, his dog. His farmhouse stands to this day on the edge of Pinburg — what's left of Pinburg."

On the next page they studied a photograph of George Post in a baptismal dress. Further on they saw Leonard with one foot on the running board of his E M F. They spent the rest of the afternoon absorbed in the album, speaking low, like sleepers mumbling in a dream.

At twenty to five Mrs. Mullen called to say she was starting out.

"He'll be at the curb," said Nancy. "He just now started down the stairs."

"Did you have a nice visit?"

"Yes. He talks of coming again, now that he's broken the ice."

"That would be nice. I'm giving Florence Becker a ride home so you understand why I can't run up."

"Margaret, have you ever known him to be dizzy?"

"Dizzy? In January he had dizzy spells."

"What did the doctor say?"

"We didn't have him see the doctor. He got over them by himself."

"Really, Margaret, I think he should be looked at good and proper. The doctor straightened out Wilfred once when he was unsteady like that. There's a medicine for it."

"We'll see how he comes along. Take care of yourself, Nancy."

"He's my bridge."

Mrs. Mullen was calling from a pay phone in a parking lot. She hung up and turned to Mrs. Becker.

"Now he's talking about going back for another visit. It reminds me of the children when they had to be carted clear across the city to scouts and birthday parties."

"I don't know how you do it, Margaret. You must be one of God's own saints the way you've taken care of him all these years. And it isn't only me that says so. The girls at bridge say it." The preparation on Mrs. Becker's face was drying and lightly sprinkling the collar of her new coat.

An attendant delivered the orange car. They got in and found themselves in rush-hour traffic. As Mrs. Mullen inched her way out of the parking lot through a crowd of pedestrians, a flurry of snow dusted the windshield. There was a cold, pink light in the sky but at street level, between the tall buildings, it was dusk.

Once in the street, Mrs. Mullen waited several minutes

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for a line of cars to move. She looked in the mirror and patted her hair. "Did I ever tell you, Florence, how old we think Nancy Clancy is? We think she's a hundred."

"A hundred years *old?* Think of it."

"We'll find out for sure when we pick up Dad. I told him to find out. But, Florence, I'm afraid when we pick him up you'll have to ride in back. It's all he can do to get in and out of the front seat and if we once got him in the back seat I'm afraid we'd never get him out, his joints are so stiff. Would you mind terribly?"

"Nonsense. It's little enough to do. But if Nancy Clancy lives on Laurel, I really could walk from there. It can't be more than six blocks."

"No, no, no. You're alone for supper and I'm alone for supper. We're going to take Dad home, I'll fix him his soup, then you and I will go out to eat."

"Well."

"And maybe take in a movie."

"I should really fix my face."

"Fix it at my house."

Mrs. Mullen found clear sailing down a one-way street and stepped on the gas. Snowflakes, like shooting sparks, flashed in the headlights.

The little boy who spoke so clearly for his size lay on a wet snowbank with his mouth open, waiting for a snowflake to fall in. He was looking up at a streetlight around which falling snow hovered like a swarm of moths. Then he heard a bell and sat up. The ringing was new to the neighborhood and after a minute he got to his feet and followed the sound across several front yards. The snowbanks he stepped in were crusty, and the grass was freezing crisp and slippery under the light, new snow. He stopped in front of the stone apartment house and looked up to the third floor. It was not a bell; it was an old lady extending her thin wrists out through the narrow space under her hinged storm window. She was banging a brass bowl with a pipe. She dropped the bowl when she saw the boy and she put her face down to the opening.

"There he is and what did I just tell Margaret?"

To understand her, the boy had to stand directly beneath the window.

"There he is behind you," she said, and the boy turned to see a dark shape on the snow. He approached it and recognized the old man who had told him of the hundred-year-old lady. He saw his cane upright in a snowbank and his hat on a sheet of thin ice that had earlier been a puddle. The old man was scowling. The boy snatched at his sleeve and raised an arm, but the old man did not help himself up. He scowled. He seemed determined to stay where he was. Looking back at the old lady's window, the boy saw she still had her face to the opening and he returned to stand against the wall where he could hear her better.

"I came to the window to tell him he forgot his pipe," she was saying at the top of her small voice, "and I saw him fall. He's dead. The way he fell I know he's dead. He collapsed. Didn't I say I'd see the poor man dead? I no more than said it and he died. And he wasn't anywhere near born when that picture was taken in Leonard's pasture by the creek. I've called Father Melvin and I've called Doctor Fergusson, but he's dead, I can tell you that." She was stuffing something through the opening under the window. "Here's my afghan to cover him. He should be covered until help comes."

The afghan, worn thin as tulle, fluttered to the ground. The boy picked up a corner of it and took a few steps toward the dead man, but when he saw a car stop at the curb and the woman on the near side shrink back from the window and the other woman get out and come around past the headlights to the sidewalk saying "What now?" he dropped the afghan and ran home. □

STEPHEN DOBYNS

BEING TALKED TO

You ride fear like a thrown knife.
You are also the target. You watch
your death in the mirror. It
touches you through the glass. Now
it touches you again. You are riding
some animal that is out of control.
You are wearing it down. No matter
where or how you fall, I will be there:
not to catch you but to gather you up.

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NAOMI LAZARD:

LINES IN THE MARGIN OF WINTER

for Eugene

The end of autumn now, the wind
breaks free. Treetops scribble wildly
on the line of sky. Silently the bears
are coming along the footpath,
searching for winter. It won't be long.

Is this my shadow sticking to the ground?
My arms hanging loose, my own head
splintered by light? Is it myself at last
listening for the bears? I want to escape
with them as they do their slow step

of accepting. Last year I thought
I walked on water, my life a pastel
tinted photograph I carried in front of me.
I looped some drops of water round
my neck like charms, now they are falling

out of the past. So I am still the same,
waiting between the sheets for your letter,
sleeping in a strange bed that feels
like the floor. When morning taps
my window with its cane I'll creep

outside again, lost after that rough trip
by moonlight. Nothing went right.
I screamed back at the devil who was only
doing his job, offering me another life.
He is clever but this is the life I want.

I want to be with these bears, this winter.
If you have no time for a letter
send me the envelope with your name on it.
It will tell me that I must be here, that
the bears are preparing, that you too

will move into the first snow fall,
your head of a Persian king lowered
and your black marble hair curling
at the ends. Your steps will fall away
from you into winter. Dear friend,

your envelope will tell me that someday
I will be gentle with my failure,
that in my time I may invent a mystic
dance and a partner who will free me
from my burden, the need for dancing well.

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TWO POEMS

LOVE LETTER FROM THE END OF THE WORLD

I want you to understand
how it's been with me, how I came
to a place I knew was going to kill me.
I stayed as long as I could.
It was the starving cats that kept
me there, the donkeys crying,
the roosters who didn't know

day from night anymore. That island
was highly recommended for its dazzling
rocks. The sea kept me alive,
some wise clams, fierce little
sea urchins that stuck their spines
into me. The tiny hands of the sea
kept my body alive all night

while I listened to the donkeys
weeping. The genius of the sea
slipped into my brain, loved it
with sea kisses. It wasn't too late.
I invented you; a sudden inspiration
needing only a quick jab on my life
to get it going. You shot out

of the empty spaces between
the valves of my heart. I keep on
inventing you, describing you
over and over to myself. You keep me
alive now, your long back flicking
from one side to another. I invent you
waking up in the morning, opening

your eyes all at once like a child
because it's a new day and it is enough.
I write you love letters
which you never answer. No sign,
no envelope with your name on it.
No falling stars, no comet, nothing
predicted at all this year.

I send you leaves for your contemplation,
you will be able to paper your walls
with leaves and my love letters.
They will surround you, glow after you
when you turn out the lights.
I am still inventing you, describing
your voice for myself, writing

scripts for it that have no end.
Here it is the end of the world.
Allende is dead. The donkeys
are crying, the cats in Hydra
are still starving. You are near
your window looking out at the street,
holding my most recent love letter.

I say, "My darling, Allende is dead.
Pablo Neruda too, his work destroyed.
It is our Saint Bartholemew's night
of the soul. My country is suffering
from leprosy. We all carry bells."
Nobody you know is in the street.
There is no more room on your walls.

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Going Under

A STORY BY ANDRE DUBUS

to Holly

Miranda is wearing purple and waiting in the open doorway, behind her are the yellow walls of the living room and the orange couch where they have loved, her hair is nearly black, it is very long, and her body is long and slender. She is twenty-one years old; the day she was born Peter was fifteen. In her purple sweater and pants she is lovely, and he presses his face into her shoulder, her hair, he is squeezing her and her heels lift from the floor, then he kisses her and breathes from deep in her throat the scorched smell of dope. He looks at her green eyes: they are glazed and she is smiling, but it is a smile someone hung there; Miranda is someplace else. But now her eyes are making some appeal, then they move away from Peter's and when they return they are simply green again, bright again, and she nestles into his chest and murmurs "Only one little pipe," and he holds her ever more tightly, crushing against her the loneliness he always feels when she lowers between them the glass wall of her smoking; the muscles of his arms and chest are taut with squeezing her, he is working isometrics against his heart, and it begins to give, it is subdued, it won't scream at her. It knows the heavy price of pushing Miranda further away.

He holds and kisses her again, and they move through the living room—her black-and-white photographs are on the walls; soon she will start working with color—and into the kitchen where she makes him a martini. She is not really a drinker, she has never drunk a whole martini, but he has taught her to make them and she likes to and when it is ready she tastes it then hands it to him, and he sits at the table and watches her strong fingers peeling boiled shrimp. Her face is straining against the dope, she is trying to listen to him as he props his feet on a chair and sips the martini and unwinds. He tells her about his afternoon and the traffic driving home from Boston and she listens with exaggerated concentration, her responding smiles come a moment late and are held a moment too long.

By candlelight they eat shrimp cocktail while the sole broils, her kitchen is light blue, and from the walls hang red and orange pots and mugs; Dylan songs come from the record player in her bedroom, they eat fish and drink Chablis, she has only a couple of glasses because she is already high, he helps her with the dishes, and they linger still in the kitchen. He finishes the wine, the candles burn and drip and in their light her face overwhelms him, his blood is quick, she sees this and her smile vanishes, her face ages with passion, they rise and she leans over and blows out the candles, and they walk down the hall toward the music in the dark.

In the morning he wakes first; early sunlight comes through the window and he goes to it and looks out at the bright snow on the hemlock branches that nearly touch the frosted pane. He gets back in bed. After a while Miranda begins to wake; he feels her watching him, and he turns his head. She is staring at him, the way his children used to stare from their baby beds; he would pass the bedroom door and see Kathi lying on her back, plump fingers rubbing the satin border of her blanket, her eyes staring wide and blank as though her mind were still asleep. Miranda is the only adult he's ever seen wake that way. He is about to speak to her but she closes her eyes and is asleep. When she wakes again he brings her grapefruit juice and they lie warmly and drink.

"Let's eat lobsters tonight," he says. "I'll cook them."

She looks away. Her eyes do not leave his but she looks away. It's a talent she has.

"I won't be able to," she says.

"Oh. Well maybe tomorrow night."

"I don't think I'll be able to then either."

"I thought we had plans for tonight. A movie."

"Did we?"

"I guess we didn't."

This is the way they end up talking. Miranda has a fiance; Peter doesn't know why. That is, he doesn't know why, having a fiance, she began making love with him; or, making love with him, still has a fiance. Now he knows, and she knows he does, that her fiance is making some demand; perhaps he called yesterday and asked her to come to Connecticut today. Probably he did, and probably that pressure is why she smoked last night. But Peter can only work with probabilities, with guesses, for the

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centrifugal force of their evasion takes them further and further from the center of themselves. He lies quietly, feeling the week-end stretching out before him and now in the room demons are about and he turns to Miranda, his touch is gentle and she believes it is gentle, for that is what she needs now; she wants forgiveness and she believes he is giving it to her, but he is not. Not now. He has done that long ago, forgiven her in advance for every betrayal he had already decided to take. It is not forgiveness now, it is not even tenderness, his gentle fingers are wily, they don't show how desperate he is, they stroke away her fear, they draw love to her warm surfaces, joyfully she takes him and he has what he wants: the demons are gone. Yet there is more: demons gone are demons forgotten, and now he is free to watch her face and love her, and she is free too, she feels absolved, her eyes are uncluttered, they are passionate and profound, and she says: "I love you, Peter, I love you —"

That moment carries him through the rest of the day; or, it helps him do what he must do to get through a winter Saturday. He is a disc jockey and five afternoons a week his voice leaves him and goes into ears he will never know. When he was younger he was an actor. Then he had a son and named him David, and then a daughter and they named her Kathi, and he went into radio. For a while he hated his life, and at night he drank. Then after a couple of months he started feeling good. He started feeling very good. His work was not exciting, but he liked making money and bringing it home to Norma and David and Kathi. He liked having money to go see plays, and he liked not having to worry about being in one. He put on weight and made friends who came over on Saturday nights. This happy adjustment to the possibility of peace coincided with his admission that he had no more talent than thousands of others, and he would have spent his life trying to do TV commercials while he looked for work on the stage. For a long time he enjoyed those pleasures that money and family love can bring. But now his family is in Colorado and Norma is married to an affluent man and, though he sends money for the children, they don't need it.

They left last summer and on that morning he woke with a heart heavy and dead, as if waking for the funeral of his dearest friend, and he drank juice and took bacon from the refrigerator and laid three strips in a skillet but he was trembling and his stomach fluttering and he put the slices back in the package, shoving them curved and folded under the cellophane. He would have had a drink but he didn't want their memory through the years to smell and taste again booze on their father's morning lips. Then he was faint with fear and he breathed deeply several times and got into the shower, his heart no longer grieving as if for another's death: it was his own execution he cleansed himself for, scrubbing under the hot spray, trying to feel and see nothing but his hand and the bar of soap and his lathered and dripping flesh, but he saw himself driving there and he saw them coming out of the house with love and goodbye in their faces and he raged aloud *No No No*, eyes closed and fists swinging at air and spray and then he slipped: his feet gone and arms reaching, one against the flat wet wall, the other toward the handle of the glass door, clutching at it and missing as his head struck the back of the tub and he lay gazing up at the spray that now hit his belly and groin then he closed his eyes and waited to be knocked out. After a while he opened his eyes and touched his head. A swelling; no blood. He stood up: he was able to. He would be able to shave now, to put on clothes, to drive there, to do it all. Before leaving the bathroom he looked once at the tub where he wanted to lie bleeding while the water struck him hot then warm and finally cold while he slept.

The day was blue and warm, the breeze from the east: a beach day. They were waiting on the front steps of the house he had left: plump red-haired Kathi, her eyes excited and green and troubled with love, eight years old yet Peter knew that as well as her fatherless Colorado mornings and nights and the shyness of stepfather suppers she saw every moment of his waking and preparing which now he mustered himself to conceal. His son was ten, his light brown hair over his ears and down close to his shoulders, near blond from their days at the sea, bony once but now muscles too, his shoulders broad and sloping, and his hand in Peter's was loving but Peter could feel in it too his separate peace and he knew that because Kathi was a girl he would live in a different way in her memory than in his son's. When Peter left home David would not help Kathi and Norma help him load the car, and when Peter went inside and kissed him, holding his turning face, he would not leave the house, so Peter went out with Kathi and Norma and kissed them both and started the car then David came running, it was dusk and in that light he ran gray and without features, then he stooped and picked up something from the dark lawn, he was close to the window now, arm lifting as he ran, his face clear now, crying, shouting *You bum You bum You bum* and throwing something that missed as Peter fled. When they saw each other two days later the boy had accepted Peter's betrayal; he moved back into Peter's love, accepted that too, but his acceptance had about it an aura of manly decision, and Peter could feel his eyes and his touch saying: *You have chosen to go. All right. Then I must grow without you and since there's nothing I can do but accept it, I might as well do better than that: I choose it.* So on the front steps as the three of them sat, the car in the driveway to their right packed for the trip west, David's blue eyes were pained for his father and for himself, yet that pain was muted by his resolve to endure. Holding him, Peter tried very hard to be grateful for that resolve.

Then Norma came out and when she saw them she turned her head and stood wiping her eyes then faced them and pressed Peter's hand and started for the car. He rose and pulled Kathi and David up with him. They followed Norma to the car. She turned and looking at some point on his neck or chest she reached for him,

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hugged him very hard, patted his back, whispered "Take care" and had turned and was gone even as he whispered the "You too" she never heard. She circled the car and got in and he couldn't see her face till he crouched between David and Kathi, only a glance at her profile, her fingers brushing quickly at her eyes, then he was looking into their faces, and then long hugs and many kisses, tight squeezes till they all gasped, and saying again and again "At Christmas you'll fly out," then he asked who had first turn in the front seat, it was Kathi, and he picked her up and put her on the seat and buckled her in and while he was doing that David got into the back and buckled his belt. Norma had mercifully started the engine and he leaned in and kissed David and then stepped back smiling, waving, calling out to their mournful and smiling faces to have a good trip, to write him about the trip, to paint pictures of the trip. to send him pictures of the trip, giving them that final image as they drove away, their arms waving out the windows: their father standing erect and smiling in the morning sun, wishing them well.

Then he drove home through tears and again tried to prepare a meal and again could not eat, then he lay on his bed and submitted with curiosity and hope to the rape of grief. He lay there for an hour while the faces of David and Kathi assaulted him. Then he gave up: he could neither die of a broken heart nor go crazy. He got up from the bed, smoothed the wrinkles he had made, took off his clothes, laid them neatly on the bed, put on jock strap and gym shorts, his heart still heavy as he tied his white leather running shoes, but his blood quickening with challenge and hope; he tied a red handkerchief around his forehead to keep sweat out of his eyes and went outside, and he ran.

It is what he is doing now, wearing a nylon running suit, a windbreaker, mittens, and a ski cap. He is now two miles from home on a road going east from his apartment. He lives in a small town, so already he is out in the country; he runs past farm houses, country homes, service stations. There are not many cars and most of the time he has the privacy of his own sounds — his steady breathing, his feet on the wet ploughed and sanded blacktop — and, more than that, the absolute privacy of his body staking its claim on a country road past white hills and dark green trees, gray barns, and naked elms and maples and oaks waiting for spring: his body insisting upon itself, pumping blood and pounding up hills. Running is the only act in his life that gives him what he pays for. It is as simple as that.

Two and a half miles from his house, at the top of a hill, he looks across the sparkling white meadows, shadowed by trees and barns, and sees the Merrimack and chunks of ice flowing to the sea. Then he turns and starts back. Sweat has turned to ice on his handlebar moustache, he is running against a cold wind that has now frozen a drop of sweat on his freeze-burning cheek, he can see the droplet of ice at the bottom of his vision, one nostril is frozen partly shut, the temperature is around nineteen but the wind hits him with a chill below zero, his jock strap is frozen hard as a shield at his crotch, and its edges chafe his legs. He approaches a man walking, a man over sixty, far beneath his clothing he is wiry, he is walking briskly on the side of the road in boots and corduroys and sweaters and mackinaw, his face is red in the cold, and somehow Peter knows he is not walking to someplace, he is walking to walk, and when Peter is close enough they smile at each other and the man says "I wish I could do that," and Peter says "You don't need to." The man's eyes are good ones, and Peter waves and runs on, feeling lighthearted at the sight of the old man with a smile and a fast walk and bright eyes; and against and through the cold wind he runs happily home with aching lungs.

Dusk comes to his rooms before it comes to the sky. He turns on the lights and goes outside and stands on the shovelled and icy sidewalk and watches it come. He is drinking a hot toddy. On the common across the street, where stoned kids sprawl in the warm seasons, pines and bare maples and elms cast their final shadows on the snow. Beyond the common is a white church whose lighted steeple rises above the trees, above everything in the town, and stands against the darkening sky. There is a wide strip of light to the west, but all color has gone with the sun and as he sips and shivers and watches, the light fades and dusk is here, the worst time for the lonely, when sounds are louder and silence has a shape Peter can feel as he walks through it, and when death on a cold wind touches the windows. Then dusk is gone too, night has come dark and cold, Peter looks up at the stars and tries to recall this morning with Miranda, but the memory is cerebral and nothing against the dark. He goes inside and, like his children, he is wary of turning corners and opening closet doors, and he wants to tell his children they are right, that long ago when he told them it was only their imagination he was right too but not right enough, for what they saw yet couldn't see frightened them, and it was real.

He makes another drink and turns the records over, he is listening to Brubeck and Mulligan, and he sits on the bed, looking at the yellow phone on the bedside table. His body is vibrant from his run, he feels strong and able, and he'd better be, for now the demons are here, they are moving in the room, they are waiting. They won't come and get him. Always they watch and keep their distance; when he feels strong they watch quietly, like prone dogs; when he weakens they grow restive, and he can almost hear them. He has learned the rules: they are powerless to close that final distance, they cannot seize him unless he opens his own gates. He picks up the phone and dials the area code of loss, then the numbers of where they live. Norma answers.

"Are you all right?" she says.

"Yes," and he tightens his closed eyes and pictures her in the house in Colorado. She has not changed with the times: her brown hair is cut short, she uses lipstick, she smokes Luckies. She is wearing slacks and a tight sweater, showing the good curves of her body that finally

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he could no longer touch. He has not seen the house; probably he never will. The children have written to him that it is new and big and has large windows and from the kitchen window they look at mountains. Kathi painted a picture of the house and sent it to him; it seems to be a ranch house. She painted her own face grinning out her bedroom window. Beyond the house a smiling sun shines over the mountains, and a grinning dog stands on the green lawn.

He asks for the children and she says she'll get them, she leaves the phone and he listens to her calling them, he strains to hear every sound in the house, and now he is listening for smells and colors too, for warmth and light, he is listening for joy and sorrow and everything he doesn't know, and now Kathi is on one phone and David on another, and Peter's voice is warm and cheerful: "I liked your letters and your pictures. How are you?"

"Fine." "Fine; how are you?"

"Good. What were you doing?"

"When?"

"Just now. When I called."

"Watching TV." "Cartoons," Kathi says. "It's snowing."

"Is it a good snow?"

"Yeah!" David says. "We didn't go to school." "So we get three days off." Kathi says. " 'Cept tomorrow we're supposed to have skiing lessons. But maybe we won't."

"Skiing lessons? Both of you?"

"Yeah," David says. "We're in the same group too." "It's hard to walk on them."

"Do you like it?"

"It's neat!" David says.

"Do you like it, Kathi?"

"Maybe so. I'll see."

"Good. You learn to ski, and then it'll be spring and then in summer we'll go to the beach every sunny day. I'm getting bunk beds to go in my living room —"

"Bunk beds?" David says. "Neat!"

"I want the top," Kathi says.

"We'll work it out, and I'm going to try to work mornings from six to ten instead of afternoons so we'll have the rest of the day for the beach. I'm pretty sure I can swing it, and we'll get brown as old wet driftwood —" then they are all talking about summer coming, and flying to Boston, they are talking about the beach, David wants boiled lobsters at the cheap screen picnic table restaurant near the sea, Kathi hates school, she wants summer, David doesn't mind school, he says Kathi won't make friends, that's why she doesn't like it, and when she assents with her silence (Peter can feel that silence: it is hot-faced while a chill creeps like fog over her heart) his own heart breaks, his arms yearn to hold her, to protect her, to do anything that will take her happily through her days, realizing at once that this is true and not true, for he will do anything for Kathi except submit to the death of living with and trying once more after the long killing pain to love her mother, and all he can say is "Try, Kathi; I was shy too; you have to try, no one will come to you, people aren't like that, they go their own ways, you give it a try, you hear?" Knowing he is saying nothing, and now they are all saying I love you, they are all smacking kisses into the three phones, his closed eyes see Kathi and David, then they start over again I love you I love you I love you and kisses and kisses over the wires, through his clear night and their late afternoon snow, and when he hangs up he does not cradle the receiver, demons move in from the walls, he reaches over and depresses the button and then he calls Jo. As always her voice is guarded, as though she were a fugitive. He asks her to dinner. Her voice doesn't change, but she accepts. Then he takes off the records, turns on the radio so he will not come home to silence, leaves on the lights, and flees his apartment.

Some people divorce because they hope for resurrection and afterwards you can see in them a new energy, a new strength. But Peter believes Jo did it with her last effort, like a suicide stepping onto the chair and ducking her head into the noose.

"It's been so long since I've had a good meal," she says.

"What do you eat?"

"Frozen things. Things in cans. Pizza. It's rotten to do it to the girls. Sometimes I feel guilty and I cook something and eat it with them."

They have brandy and they have pulled their chairs near the fireplace, where two logs are burning. In the restaurant she smoked a lot and talked a lot, and she ate a large meal, oysters on the half shell, broiled scallops, and Peter, his back tingling like a nervous gunfighter's (for the demons followed him into his car, and in the chatter behind him they stalked among tables), savored his shrimp broiled on a stick with tomato and bacon and resting on a nest of spinach, he sipped Chablis, putting a stake on the good meal, the bottle of wine, and Jo was good to be with, better than eating alone; but she has not laughed since dinner, her smile is forced, and in her voice and dark eyes her ache is bitter, it is defiant, and he feels they are not at a hearth but are huddled at a campfire in a dangerous forest.

He met her in the early fall, before Miranda. She is one of his listeners, one of the women he talks to on weekday afternoons, the only one he really knows. In the fall the station had a contest with one hundred winners: the wives who wrote the best letters telling why they should leave their husbands at home and go to a New England Patriot football game. *All my life I've been watching men,* she wrote. *When I was a very little girl I watched boys throwing rocks and beating each other up and racing across the schoolyard after school. When I was a teen-ager I watched them playing football and basketball, and at home they played street hockey and when the ponds froze they played ice hockey across the street from my window. I watched them drive off in cars, I watched them hitchhike to Florida, I watched them go into the service and I watched them come home strutting*

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and winking about their adventures. I always believed when I got married it would be my turn. My husband would watch me. He doesn't. He watches football on television. If I'm going to spend my life watching men who aren't watching me, then at least once it should be fun, and I should be able to dress up and go out to do it. Maybe my husband will see me on television and then he can watch me watching.

Peter sat with her at the game, she told him about her letter, she was pleased that he remembered it. During the game he watched her. She was excited, she was having fun, but there was a desperate quality about her fun, as though she had just been released from prison. It was the same that night, after the studio party where they drank enough to impassion their intent: in the motel she made love with a fury, but he knew it was forced, that her tightening arms, her bucking hips were turned against the fetters which clanked at her heart. The affair was short because that clanking never went away. It was in her voice: when she was not pretending — and nearly always she pretended — her voice was low and flat, as if she had just waked from a deep sleep; but most of the time her voice was high and brittle with cheer, her laughter was forced and shrill, and he could hear in it the borders of hysteria. Like most unfaithful wives she was remorseless: she felt she deserved a lover. Yet it did her no good. Her heart was surrounded by obdurate concentric circles of disappointment and bitterness; she could not break through, so Peter couldn't either, and finally they broke it off and both pretended that aversion to the deceptions and stolen time of adultery was the reason.

"You always liked to eat," Peter says.

"I know."

"What else don't you like anymore?"

"It's not that I don't like things."

"You can't, is that it?"

"Yes. Sometimes I take pills."

"To cheer you up?"

"They're not *that* good. He keeps calling, he doesn't want me to go through with the divorce, he wants me to take him back. Sometimes I think I ought to. It's not worth it."

"What's not worth it?"

She shrugs. Peter is angry, he wants to tell her that for years he hasn't thought about sin, hasn't believed in sin, hasn't used the word sin, but now he is thinking depression is a sin, perhaps the only one that many people can commit. But he takes their glasses to the kitchen for more brandy. Her house is clean; he knows that unhappy women often lapse into disorder and dirt, and walking back to the living room he feels affection for Jo, he thinks of her dusting furniture as his voice comes over the radio. He sits beside her and tells her funny stories, he clowns for her, and it is like the stage again, he is not Peter Jackman, he is a changing face, a cracking voice, he is a field of laughter, and she laughs and sometimes succeeds in really laughing and when she does this she reaches across the short distance between their chairs and grips his arm or hand, and he regrets but cannot ignore the current in her fingers and without a word he accepts. Still he rises, hoping to leave, but when they kiss her tongue is a desperate cry on his, so he follows her creeping up the stairs past her daughters' rooms and into her bed where with a heart like packed snow he makes love and then lies stroking her face as though with a cool cloth against fever. When she is sleepy he gets up and dresses in the moonlight and she says very quietly: "Peter? Will you come back sometime?"

He tells her he will, and he goes out into the night.

"I want you to care," he says.

"I can't," Miranda says.

She is sitting on the orange couch; at another time he would be sitting beside her, but his (and her) Saturday night has riven them, though he is the only one who knows it; or he believes he is the only one who knows it. So he faces her from a basket chair across the narrow room. She is sipping tea, and she is tired. She is smoking Marlboros, one after the other. Like many girls her age, she smokes almost continually. A part of Peter admires this; he sees it as insouciance toward death. Another part of him sees it as insouciance toward life.

"What does that mean, you can't? Do you mean you can't feel anything because you just aren't able to, or do you mean you can't because you're not supposed to?"

"I'm not supposed to."

"But did you feel anything when I told you?"

"Yes."

"Did you like it?"

"No."

"Then you're not free. And I'm not either. But I already know that. It's you that has to know it. We both made love with other people last night. We're supposed to care. If we can't, then we're trapped in something else."

"I'm tired," she says.

She puts out her cigarette and lights another. In the past few minutes he has built a cage around her and behind it her face is confused and frightened. He knows she would like to put on music and smoke dope and quietly merge with the beats and rhythms from her record player. It is late Sunday night, Miranda has an hour ago returned from Connecticut and has submitted to his pleas on the phone — he has been phoning every half hour since six o'clock — and has let him come over for a drink. He is drinking bourbon, though he knows he shouldn't, for it will oil his tongue and he will talk and one of his rules with Miranda, one of the rules which allows him to keep her, is not to talk too much of how he feels, for if she knows how much he loves her (she knows), how much he needs her (she knows), she will bolt under the pressure. She doesn't actually bolt: she doesn't send him away, she doesn't walk out on him. She simply goes away inside herself, while she turns to him a smile, gives to him a hand; and that makes him more lonely than any escape by any woman he's ever known. So daily with her he lives with songs he will never sing and screams he will never scream. But tonight he is drink-

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ing, and in a fearful moment of release he decides to go to the kitchen and pour himself another, knowing as he watches it pour that he too will be pouring soon, and within his relief there is a core of anger, the contradictions tangled like barbed wire in him again, for what he feels is love and he wants to tell it to Miranda yet at the same time he is angry because she has managed them so that he can't tell her, and now, going back to the living room with his bourbon, he wants with all his heart to carry her away and make her his wife, yet he also would like to grab her by the shoulders and shake her till she cries.

At the door to the living room he stops. He looks at her quiet and lovely profile: she sips the tea, wipes her lips with the back of her cigarette hand, the lips shaping a kiss as they press themselves dry, then she draws on the cigarette, exhales, and begins again with the tea. She knows now that he is at the door but she doesn't know he is stopping to watch her, and in that moment, when she is drying tea from her lips, he is struck with a purifying love which he knows, if he could sustain it, would save him. He sees a sad young girl who is trying to live as well as she can; who does not hurt him out of spite or malice but only so she can survive; who gives him as much of herself as she is able to and only balks when he demands more; and who has gotten him through many nights. He could not help falling in love with her; what he could have helped was what happened afterward, and he had chosen to make love with a woman who wore an engagement ring; and standing in the doorway he is about to simply say I love you, and kiss her goodnight, and then go home and let her sleep. But now, though she doesn't look at him, she is aware that he is watching her and looking at her profile he knows this and the distance of the moment is broken and he makes a final choice: he crosses the room and settles into the chair.

"Talk to me," he says.

Her eyes raise to his, then she looks down at her hands with the cigarette and tea, and then she sips and smokes.

"You have to tell me what's happening in you. Do you think it's me you love, is that it? Are you waiting to be sure? Talk to me, Miranda. Why are you making love with me? You can tell me that, can't you? Don't you know it's painful for me when you go off for a week-end and we pretend you didn't? If we could at least talk about it maybe it wouldn't be so bad. If you'd say anything at all about what you feel, even if you'd say you loved him and you were just doing some humbug with me, even that, even if I had that definition of what I am, but you won't even say that much, you just sit there and look at your hands. And there's death in you. With your dope and your silence and your two lovers. You erase yourself. Well you're not going to erase me too. And that's what happens when I'm lonely and I end up with Jo. And I'm not going to do that anymore. I've *been* there. Jesus I've *been* there, Miranda —" Sitting in the basket chair he is subtly overwhelmed, memory launches a sneak attack, his blood remembers making love with a landlocked heart, and he sits there with the ghosts of love past: the affairs with melancholy wives when he was a husband, and with each new one he believed he was in love yet always the day came for goodbye and usually it came some time after both hearts had turned away or back onto themselves. No matter, all were goodbyes from the instant of their first hello, all were liasons whose passions were fed by the empty cupboards of the lovers' homes; and all the time to make these couplings profound instead of privative he tried as best he could to believe he was in love, his love for Norma long dead, killed by their mutual adulteries, symptoms of a more complex distance which he has never truly understood; and with each new woman he said to himself: *She must be the last, she will be the last, she is the last,* because there was death in that repetition of lovers, each goodbye was a little death, and the affairs themselves were too because they were shallow and ephemeral and so he felt shallow and ephemeral too, his soul untapped on his march to death, a stranger between the thighs of a stranger — "Miranda." He stands up. He wants to cross the room and take the cup and cigarette from her hands, but he doesn't dare, for he is afraid that his eyes and the touch of his hands cannot reach her. So he stands at his chair and uses his voice. "Miranda: will you live with me?" She looks up at him and in her eyes there is a flicker of assent, he sees it, grabs it, holds on for his very life while she looks down again into her empty tea cup, her cigarette is finished too, she reaches for the pack, picks it up, changes her mind, puts it down, then changes her mind again and takes a cigarette. "I love you, Miranda. I can't keep sharing you. I want you to come live with me. Now; tonight." He looks around the room to see what he can pack in their cars: the photographs from the walls, the table lamps, the coffee table; cushions; from the bedroom the record player and records, he has a vision of the two of them carrying things downstairs, with each load their hearts are lighter, they ascend the stairs together for another load, their impulsiveness gives them easy laughter — "We can pack some things tonight. Tomorrow morning I'll get a truck and move the rest while you're at work. When you come home it'll be all done. This week I'll build you a darkroom, there's room in the kitchen, it's too big anyway. We'll do it. Won't we? I know I shouldn't sound like something wounded you have to bring in off the street. But I don't have time anymore to be smart — will you live with me?"

"I can't."

"Why? You want to. I can feel it. It's not him stopping you. If you really loved him you wouldn't want me at all. So why can't you?"

"I'm too young."

"You're not too young. You have two lovers."

"I wish I didn't have any."

"You mean you wish nobody asked you questions."

"Yes. That's what I wish."

"You can't do that, Miranda. You can't make love and not have questions. Goddamnit, Miranda —" But there is nothing to say. He has said it all, and between

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him and Miranda his guts hang in the air. He is adrift in those desperate spaces of vulnerability where she will never follow, there is no way for him to get back, and he yields to his old stubborn muscle, the heart, and he follows it across the room, watching himself fall to his knees and take the cigarette from her hand and put it out, then hold both her hands and look into her green brimming eyes and say: "Miranda I can't do it anymore. I can't pretend I love you less, I'm not strong enough to keep pretending I'm strong, I can't keep standing around waiting and staying alive on the little you give, because you're all I've got — don't you know that? surely you *know* that — I don't have my kids, I don't have work, I have a job — Miranda: listen. I'm not as crazy as I sound. Desperate, yes. I mean I know I spend twenty-three hours every day getting in shape for that one hour when I might go under. Is that what scares you?" The tears are going down her cheeks now, and she is slowly shaking her head. "It has to be that or nothing, Miranda. I can't go back to the other. Come with me, Miranda. You love me. We'll make it. Come now, baby, come now —" Her tears are faster, they flow over her lips and drop to her lap, but still she is shaking her head even as her hand takes the back of his neck and pulls him forward; her other hand goes around his back, his face is in her breasts, and he feels against his forehead the beating of her heart. He tries to stand but her arms hold tightly. His hands on her knees he pushes himself up, he stands, and her arms fall away. She rises with him. Fiercely she hugs him again, and now there is a turnabout that mollifies his anguish, her silence and her tears on his cheek pull him out of himself, he is holding her, through her soft hair he is stroking her neck, his lips turn to her ear and he says: "I'm sorry, Miranda. I have to. It hurts too much, the way it was. I have to try to survive. I'm sorry, baby —" and he hugs her very tightly, glances once at her damp face as he turns away and takes his coat and leaves.

There will be no sleep tonight. He knows it when he enters his apartment, which is lighted; from the bedroom comes Janis Joplin on the radio. He goes to the kitchen: bourbon started his evening at dusk and brought his night to its dark crescendo, and now perhaps it will allow him to wane. He makes a drink, brings the bottle to the table, sits down, and props his feet on a chair. He is about to drink but instead he pauses and listens to McCartney. He does not want the music coming down the hall from the bedroom. When it does that it only penetrates the spaces near the door, where the sink is. But over there at the refrigerator and there at the stove and here at the cupboard and counter opposite his chair and here beside him at the dark reflecting window and the wide sill where he rests his arm there is no music and when he looks at these places he sees silence. He goes to the bedroom and gets the portable radio, switching to DC when he unplugs it and listening to McCartney as he goes down the hall; on DC the reception is not as good, and he sets the radio on the counter, plugs it in, switches back to AC and the faint static is gone. He turns out the overhead light so the room is dark except for the light coming from the hall. He sits and swallows bourbon then lights a cigarette, his first of the day. The demons are stirring now, he feels them creeping down the hall, and in another moment they are standing by the sink to his right, and he feels like a colonel with an exposed flank. He finishes the drink and then another, but in his mind there is a relentless dagger of sobriety that will not give in to the booze. What he must do is sleep, and he takes the radio to the bedroom and gets into bed.

Right away his legs tell him it is no use. They will not relax, they will not sink into the mattress, they are restless as they are before he runs. He tries hypnotizing his toes and feet and calves but by the time he is repeating *My knees are asleep* the calf muscles and feet are yearning again. And he cannot make his mind stop. If he could then his muscles would follow peacefully and rest like sunning snakes, but his mind is filled with the idea and necessity of sleep, and the more he pushes with his mind the more his muscles and blood push back until the struggle gives him a sensation very much like the need to scratch. Yet still he tries to relax, he closes his eyes and breathes as he would if he were falling asleep, and for a while it nearly works, his mind has stopped thinking sleep and has begun to drift into a dream when he realizes this and is immediately awake, his heart fast, his arms tight at his sides.

His luminous clock on the chest of drawers tells him it is eight minutes after two, and now he knows he will lie awake till four at the least but probably five or six, and that he will wake at eight as usual and the day that waits for him will be long, his body tired, his reflexes distorted — he will be easily startled — and as dusk comes his heart and nerves will start again and he will have to devise some way to ease himself into the night, to sneak up on sleep. Angrily he throws back the covers and gets out of bed, his feet strike hard on the floor, his legs take him quickly to the kitchen and he gets ice and pours bourbon and returns to the bedroom where he turns on the radio and lowers the volume on Crosby Stills Nash and Young, then gets into bed, propping himself on two pillows so he can drink. He lights a cigarette and watches his exhaled smoke in the dark.

Before he has half-finished the drink he knows he will call Jo. But he tells himself he won't. It has never worked with Jo and he does not want to hurt another woman, not ever. He does not think he can love Jo, but he is afraid Jo can love him. And he does not want to go to her now, the way he is, for he knows he can mistake relief for love and then it will sour and there will be wounds. He must go it alone, ride out this night, hang on to its neck and mane, and ride. Besides, it is two twenty-seven, she will be asleep (he picks up the phone), he should be tougher than this (he is dialing), he shouldn't disturb poor Jo in all the ways this call will disturb her (it rings), it isn't right, he ought — On the second ring she answers. She has been asleep and there is fear in her voice.

"Jo, I'm sorry."

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"Peter?"

"I'm sorry. You were sleeping, I knew you'd be asleep, but —" He listens to tears coming to his voice, he will not allow them to crest, he stops speaking.

"What happened?" Jo says.

He doesn't answer. He is listening to his silent throat, trying to know if he can talk without crying; but he doesn't have to. Jo takes over, and in a moment which he even trusts he loves her.

"Come on over," she says.

"I can't do that."

He has answered without listening first and his voice is all right; or at least it doesn't break into liquid. Jo is working for him.

"Sure you can. Come on."

"It's awfully late. You won't get any sleep."

"I'll sleep tomorrow while the girls are at school."

"Are you sure?"

"Come on."

"I'll bring some bourbon."

He turns on the light and blinks, and now his legs are put to good use, they cross the room and take clothes from the closet, he dresses and goes to the kitchen and gets the bottle. Passing his bedroom door again he sees the unmade bed and knowing he is foolishly careful he goes in and makes it, leaving no signs of decline for the demons' morale. He takes a moment to decide it is all right to turn off the radio, turns it off and the bedside lamp too, gets his coat and gloves and heads fast down the hall and out that door into the foyer, dark stairs rising at his left, and goes out the front door into the cold where, on the narrow icy front porch, he stops.

The apartment's lawn is at most twenty feet wide from the front steps to the sidewalk. If he reaches the sidewalk he will go around the corner of the building, to the garage in back. To reach this sidewalk he must simply traverse the lawn, walking on a shovelled walk between low white banks of snow. But he cannot go down that walk. He stands on the porch looking at the two steps and then at the T formed by the two sidewalks and at the smooth hard snow of the lawn. He starts to step onto the first step, his leg moves, it reaches the step, the other leg follows, he is standing on the step but Peter himself is not really there, whoever Peter is has been driven in panic back into the warm and lighted apartment; he is not on the steps. His body stands spiritless and abandoned, it feels as though it has neither bone nor muscle, it is only shivering flesh inside clothing that doesn't belong to him. He turns away from the dark street and the lawn and goes back into the apartment, where he catches up with himself sitting on the bed and turning on the lamp and taking a shot from the bottle then corking it and dropping it to the bed and picking up the phone.

"Jo, I can't cross the lawn. It looked huge, it looked like Nebraska. I took a step. Or two of them. I had the bourbon and I had the car key in my hand. I couldn't get down the steps."

"You want me to come get you?"

"You can't leave your kids."

"I could leave them for just a minute."

"No."

"Don't you want me to?"

"I want to be able to move. Look, I feel better now." He looks around his room at things he has bought, things which every day tell him he's at home. They seem to be telling him that now. The room is a place he can depart from, Jo's voice on the phone is a person he can go to. He is uncorking the bottle. "I think I can make it," he says, and swallows as she says: "I'll get a fire going. We'll have hot toddies. It'll be nice, Peter."

Clutching the bottle in one hand, keys dangling from the other, he goes down the hall. He is whistling before he realizes he is. He is whistling "Summertime." In the foyer he closes the apartment door behind him, in that closed dark space the demons are so near that he wants to make some sound, not a scream or sob of terror, but a growl, a shout, a sharp command, so they will know they are still dealing with a man in possession of — He is out of the foyer, he is on the porch, and he shuts the door behind him and looks at the dark and minatory sky over dark white-splotched rooftops; across the street the common is white and smooth; black evergreens rise from it, they are tall and wide, they obscure the sky, they become the horizon until he looks past them at the white church tower with a light in the very top of its steeple, it is nearly a white light in the open unglassed windows, up where the bell is. Beyond it the sky is without stars. He looks down at his own silent white lawn, and he crosses the porch and is on the top step and without breaking stride he is on the second step and then the walk itself, he is moving, he reaches the sidewalk that parallels the street and he turns right and reaches the corner where there is a streetlight.

He looks to his left-front, lifts his eyes to the light of the steeple, scans the peaceful snow of the common, and then abruptly turns right and is looking down a dark street and sidewalk, as he moves forward he leaves the street-light behind him, he is passing his living room and now he approaches his bedroom window, but he keeps his eyes fixed on the dark sidewalk before him, he sees that and the huge stump that was a tree until the telephone lines came, he sees the shadowed snow piled between the sidewalk and the apartment and, in his vision to the front and in the corner of his left eye, the dark road. There is no more wind here than there was at the front of the apartment, there is no wind at all tonight, but on this sidewalk he is colder, his breath is fast as though he were walking briskly for miles; only a few feet ahead of him is the corner of the building, he will go past that to the driveway and then turn and walk up it and open the door to the garage and then get into his car — He stops. For a second (and in that second his fear stops the clock, he stands within the circle of a pause that threatens to hold him) he knows he cannot go forward but he also believes he cannot retrace his steps, cannot reach the corner he has left, believes he will stand immobile holding a whiskey bottle and car keys until someone comes to save him.

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Then he is turning, he is heading fast back to the corner, too relieved to feel shame or failure, the streetlight is waiting, now the door, then he is in his warm hall and he goes directly to the kitchen. He takes off his gloves and makes a drink. He goes to the bedroom, drops his coat to the floor, and turns on the radio. Judy Collins is singing, plaintive and sweet. He sits on the bed, drinks twice, drinks again, then he calls Jo. She does not say hello. She says: "I'll come get you."

"Wait. Every time you say that I think I can make it. Last time I almost got to the driveway, I got as far as the kitchen. Look: hold on, will you? I'll just go take a look outside and see how things are. Will you just hold a minute?"

"I'll hold. The fire is going. I'm looking at the fire."

"What do you have on?"

"My nightgown and a robe. They're both pink. My feet are bare. They were cold but now they're warm by the fire."

"Are you drinking?"

"A little brandy with coffee."

"Coffee? You'll never sleep."

"I need to wake up some. You woke me from what they call a drugged sleep. And I just smoked my last cigarette. And you know how coffee and brandy make you want to smoke. So you have to get out of the house so you can bring me some cigarettes. There are all-night service stations with machines."

Her voice is warm and cheerful, perhaps amused. He knows the game she is playing with him, but he needs it and it seems to be working. He imagines himself in his car, driving.

"I have some here," he says. "I'll bring those."

"Good. Go see how things look outside."

"Here I go," he says, and drops the phone to his pillow, not all the way from his ear but lowering it first to a gentle height; he feels he must treat the phone as though Jo were in it. As he goes down the hall past the children's paintings (he averts his eyes from Kathi's happy sun and happy dog and her own happy face at the window in Colorado) he knows he won't make it. The hall itself is too long, already there is too much distance from his bedroom, the only place tonight where he can be, and what will happen if he lets himself be driven there and that room too becomes untenable? He pictures himself huddled on the bed while demons crawl the floor. He looks out the front door, but does not cross the threshold, he does not even take his hand from the doorknob, his look outside is hasty and as he sees the white lawn and dark street with its dirty snowbanks and the swath of yellow sand under the streetlight, the full dark pines and hemlocks, the stripped oaks and maples and elms of the common, and the lighted steeple beyond he is seeing himself facing the alone and cold passage down the side of his apartment to the garage in the rear, and he is turning away and pulling the door shut behind him. Walking back down the hall he drinks and he drinks again before lifting Jo from his pillow.

"Things are bad out there," he says. He sits on the bed and looks around him. "Things are pretty bad in here too. They're coming with bugles, I feel like I'm in the Chosin Reservoir."

"Peter: listen. Put your drink down."

"Jesus." He puts it down.

"Do you have your coat on?"

He looks at it on the floor, shakes his head, then says: "No."

"All right. Where is it?"

"It's on the floor. Right here."

"Leave it there. Leave the drink on the table. Do you have your car keys?"

"They're in my pocket."

"Take them out and hold them." To do this he must stand up. He stands and reaches into his pocket and brings out the keys. He lets the other keys fall to the bottom of the ring and holds the ignition key at the ready. "Now go outside as fast as you can. Don't shut your door behind you. Don't look to the left or the right. Don't wear gloves or a coat. If you stop you'll be cold. You'll be cold anyway. Get in the car and start it and drive it back to your door. Then leave the engine running and come back here and get your coat and tell me you're on your way. You woke me up and now I'm awake till breakfast and I want those cigarettes and I want to see you. Now go."

The actor in him is dead but by no means buried and he mutters huskily into the phone: "All right, baby," drops the phone and surrenders to a long glance at the drink on the table but doesn't touch it. He gets a trotting start down the hall and through the foyer, leaves the front door open so light and warmth follow him outside like mute, tactile cheers. He makes it down the walk and turns and walks as fast as he can and when he reaches the corner he is shivering with cold. He turns and heads into the dark, eyes on the sidewalk; as he passes his dark living room he feels its emptiness but as he passes the bedroom he feels Jo in there on the pillow, she is a wing man in a World War II movie, he is blinded by his shattered cockpit, she is talking him back to the carrier, she is seeing him as he passes the last bedroom window and now the lone kitchen window and he has gone farther than before.

His fingers are stiff and he jams them in his pockets, the right hand still clutching the key, and he has passed the rear corner of the building, he is approaching the driveway, he turns and goes up the driveway, he knows there are two trials still ahead: stepping into the garage and then getting into the car. But he has momentum and he believes he can make it, his boots are crunching on the packed snow of the driveway, to his right is the dark rising bulk of the building where others sleep, the garage is white before him, the closed door is waiting for his hand. He is there and his cold hand closes on the black handle and he pushes upward, it is good to use his arm and shoulder, to deal with something as direct and physical as thrusting a garage door upward. The door goes up on its rollers and disappears above him. He knows better than to pause. He moves quickly into the dark

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garage, his teeth are chattering as he slides behind the wheel of the Volvo, his shivering fingers miss the ignition slot, then he finds it and inserts and turns and the engine starts as he notices (wise Jo, she must have gone crazy a few times) that the chill in his back is so severe that it has overwhelmed the other chill he would have felt on a night like this: the chill telling him that if he looks in the rear view mirror he will finally see the face of a demon.

He has no time for demons now, no warm space in his body where fear of them can live. As he backs out of the garage, twisting to his right to look out the rear window, he is thinking only of the coat and gloves on his bedroom floor. He drives to the corner, leaves the engine idling, and trots up the sidewalk and through the door and down the hall. He puts on his coat and gloves, picks up the phone, and says: "I'm on the way."

"*Good.*" Jo says, and he is down the hall and out the door. He drives through the small empty town, he stops shivering, he warms beneath his coat and in his gloves, the car warms and he turns on the heater. From the radio Joan Baez serenades and celebrates his drive past locked and front-lighted stores and one bundled policeman checking locks.

She hugs him at the door and takes him to the fire in the living room and, still holding him, gives him a maternal and possessive smile that, on a saner night, would frighten him. Looking at her he begins to think that maybe she never has gone crazy, that maybe by instinct she knew what to do with him, the way they always know what to do when someone is sick or hurt. He gives her the cigarettes, she gratefully lights one, and asks if he wants a hot toddy. He says he does. She unbuttons his coat, slips off his scarf, goes behind him and takes his coat off.

"Sit here by the fire," she says. "I'll make the drinks."

She takes the bottle and leaves. He sits and watches the fire and props his feet on a leather hassock. In the warmth and color of the room (it is blue, there are green potted plants, a seascape hangs on one wall, a landscape on another), in its smell of woodsmoke and the sound of burning logs he feels safe, and when she returns with the drinks he treasures the touch of her fingers as she gives him the glass. She puts her drink on the floor and sits at his feet and unlaces his boots. He gives in to this. At first an instinct tells him he is letting her go too far, that by saving him she will possess him, but he wants his boots off, he wants a woman to take them off, and he watches her fingers on the laces and when she is done and begins to tug at the boot he pulls his foot out. She takes off the other one and he leans back in the chair and sips. Jo remains sitting near his propped feet, her back to the fire. There are long gray streaks in her brown hair and he fondly takes one in his fingers, then smoothes it back into place. Her face is awake, her eyes alert, yet about her mouth and eyes is that weariness she will probably always have; tonight he likes it.

"What was it?" she says. "Do you know?"

"It was a girl named Miranda."

"Miranda?"

"Miranda Jones. She's twenty-one years old."

She lights a cigarette and settles her back against the hassock; her ribs touch his calf, her left arm rests on his knee and thigh.

"Tell me about her," she says.

"I don't have to. I mean, I've been through this before. I don't have to get it all out anymore."

"I want you to get it all out. For me. I want to look at it."

He drinks and tells her; once she rises and brings him another hot toddy and sits again resting her arm on his leg and sometimes she takes his hand, fondles his fingers, and when he finishes his story she says: "You didn't really love her. You only thought you did."

"I've never understood the difference."

"She was only a life jacket."

"A life jacket is enough, if you're out in the ocean."

Then he yields to her. He takes her hand and squeezes it with intent, he leaves his chair and lies beside her, this sad woman whom tonight he is learning to love; and as his fingers part her robe he says: "You and I. We're what's left over, after the storm."

Still he does not sleep. He gets up and puts another log on the fire, then lies on the rug and she returns her head to his shoulder. She lies between him and the fire, he is warm and peaceful, and his hand moves down her side and settles at her waist.

"What did you do today?" he says.

"What did I do?"

"Yes. What did you do."

"I gave the girls breakfast."

"What was it?"

"Oatmeal. Oatmeal and French toast."

"Good. Then what?"

"I washed the dishes then took the girls to church. Do you think that's silly?"

"No. No, I think it's good."

"Do you believe in God?"

"Yes."

"So do I. Do you know anything about him?"

"Not much. What church was it?"

"The Unitarian."

"The old white one by the common?"

"Yes. I looked over at your apartment. That's how I told you goodmorning."

"What did you do after that?"

"I went to the supermarket. You made me feel guilty last night, about cooking. Something funny happened at the supermarket."

"What was it?"

"You'll think I'm weird."

"No I won't."

"I left my basket and walked out."

"Why?"

"The basket was full. I had groceries for a week."

"Why did you walk out?"

"I was sad. I told you you'd think I was weird."

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"I don't. You said you were sad."

"I was looking at all the women. They looked sad. Some had little children with them. They were barking at their children. Some were smoking. Some had their coats buttoned and they were hot but they didn't take their coats off. One stood at the meat counter. She was looking around. She wanted something. There was no one behind the counter. There's a button on a pipe, and it calls the butchers out of the room where they butcher the meat. She pressed the button. No one came. I looked at her and I looked through the window where the butchers were supposed to be. There was meat on the tables and meat hanging from hooks. But no one was there. She kept pressing the button. That's when I left."

"Where did you go?"

"I went to a little market on the corner. Right down the street from here. I probably spent ten dollars more. It's a very small place and people nudge each other while they shop. There's a butcher and a man at the cash register. They knew everyone in the store except me. Everyone was talking. The butcher talked to me while he cut the meat. He told me how good the meat was. He told me he was spoiling me. He's old, and the man at the cash register is his son. I figured that out listening to them. The man at the cash register told me it was going to snow three inches. That's what I paid the ten dollars for. I'll go back."

"I'll go with you."

Outside the sky is growing light, the night is almost ended, and inside Peter lies awake. Jo sleeps in his arms, his flesh is warm from the fire, and his heart is a piñata: it bursts and streams invisible colors which he can see: they are the colors of fire, the hopeful rose and gold and red of sunrise, and in the colors he sees Jo, her eyes are a laughing pale blue sky, tonight he will bring wine and flowers, this afternoon between records he will say, once and softly: Hello Jo; and he means that hello, his warm heart pounds with it, he will follow the course of it, for love is time too, and lying here before the fire and looking at her sleeping face on his arms he knows he will love her, and with great relief and new strength his blood runs through his body and he kisses her until she warmly wakes and encircles him with her squeezing arms; he ascends; he is Prometheus; and he pauses in his passion to gently kiss her brightened eyes. □

NORMAN DUBIE

HORACE

for J.B.

Along the borders of the Sabine farm,
runners of strychnine and lime,
a bearded man stands in a wheelbarrow
singing. And why not? Give him
the vegetables he wants.
Or knock his brains out with the loose
curbstone from the well. The Goths
have been defeated, and Maecenas was his friend.

We meet eye to eye. He will braid the silk
on the husks. This man is drunk.
The cloudburst sends you running for the trees
and one woman reaches the house. He is still
standing in the wheelbarrow, soaked and loud.
The poor canvas theatre in the provincial town
drove him out. Here in the hills
Caesar is a spectacle of dead trout
washed with smashed mint and lemons.
What have I kept back?
Only this: there is no way to leave him.

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A Story by William Beeson

What Is Your Favorite: Sleeping or Waking?

1. *Sara, the Springer Spaniel*

I like sleeping because it is the only time I get to munch rabbits. Once They went away and I slept twelve and a half hours straight.

2. *Charles*

Says he is into sleep, but is probably just sleeping around.

3. *Kate*

I hate sleep. You miss so much. Every Saturday and Sunday I get up early and bathe and dress and pour a cup of coffee and sit and wait. Waiting is being alive, isn't it?

4. *The Prescotts and Their Daughter*

The Prescotts had been married ten years when it was discovered that Mrs. Prescott was pregnant. They were more stunned than anything else, but in time they adjusted and could be seen on weekends purchasing layette, diapers and bottles with a benign gaiety. She spent too much on her maternity clothes, but then she had always spent far too much. Prescott, as the time drew near, lay awake nights, staring into the darkness. Sometimes he would get up and having gone to the bathroom, stroll idly into what they now called The Nursery, which they had done over in red burlap with Klee reproductions on the wall. The room smelled of fresh paint and something else he could not identify.

It was a daughter, whom they rather lyrically named Aurora. Their friends said the name was symbolic, but they could never tell you of what.

Aurora was a lovely child, almost too good to be true and beautiful besides, which was a blessing since Prescott was nothing at all to look at and his wife, though chic, had a palely haggard air. Aurora grew as children are supposed to grow, did well in school and had many friends. Her perfection was marred only by a slightly detached manner. She had a way of looking at people, head held to one side, scrutinizing, mocking — one was never sure. Often, too, an amused little tic would erupt at the corner of her mouth, something quite out of keeping with the rest of her.

In her second year of college, Aurora fell in love. At least, she told her parents so in a letter. The young man she brought home one weekend, who always seemed one step behind her, was glossily good-looking and came from a good old family in The Coal Regions, where his grandfather and father had been barons. He was manly, persuasive and well-dressed and in time the Prescotts began to feel secure about Aurora's future.

Shortly before her marriage, Aurora was sitting in a room Mrs. Prescott persisted in calling The Sewing Room, stitching away at some dainty tea napkins she was giving to her maid of honor. Somehow or other she managed to prick her finger on the needle, which had been poisoned by an evil maid who had gone quite mad. She fell into a deep sleep from which she awoke at the end of two hundred years to find her mother, father, husband-to-be and evil maid dead and gone. She felt quite out of place and yearned for the perfection of her recent sleep. It was no surprise when, shortly thereafter, she committed suicide with a ceremonial dagger she had purchased in a curio shop.

5. *Cutie Dean*

I love pills.

Being a movie star is tough work, no matter what they tell you.

Success is tough work. So of course I am on downers and uppers and in-betweeners. Sleeping and waking is all the same.

But don't you worry, America, because I am going to kick it before it kicks me. There's where I come off better than some other hustlers I could mention.

There's more in that refrigerator beside my bed than vodka.

There's coffee ice cream.

6. *A Social Journal*

He walked in his sleep.

He would appear at the top of the staircase, stark naked, smiling like a hooked carp.

Such a diversion. We never ceased to find it amusing.

7. *Scenes from the Opera*

Being of dusky complexions, Aida and her father much prefer the night, when they can stroll by the Nile in comfort.

Their dialogues are rent only by an occasional unwed mother, setting her child afloat in a papyrus boat close in among the bullrushes.

. . . . . .

After yet another encore of the *Barcarolle*, both Nicklaus and Giuletta noticed a pale jeweled hand rising from the lagoon.

Within the Rezzonico, someone murmured: *Basta.*

. . . . . .

This is the third night Brangaene has forgotten the torch.

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8. *Reveries of Mr. Maggart, Arch Insomniac*

Somewhere there is a dog barking.

There is always a dog barking. I think it is that yellow dog down at the corner, who looks at me balefully every time I go by. Once he came and sat at the fence, watching me mow the lawn. Looking at me. Staring.

There's nothing to read. I got that book on Maximilian and Carlotta, because I'd always been interested in Maximilian and Carlotta, there was an old woman when I was growing up who'd been someone, an attendant, to Carlotta in her old age. The book told you far too much. Petty intrigues in Vienna. Such blandness in Belgium. And they were truly not happy, after the first year. He was flighty and she wanted so badly to rule. No children. Gardens instead. A mess.

I could get up and go for a walk, but that would seem odd. Anyone meeting me would recoil or worse. Flashing. Throwing open my trenchcoat, disporting my tool to someone on a four a.m. street. An adventure. Someone I'd meet might like that. Respond. Down, tool. Down, beauty.

It *is* a tool in a way. Mending. Repairing. Building. I don't feel like getting into that. Although.

Louise is snoring again. I once told her she snored and she was hurt. Better not do it again. So vulnerable, Louise. But strong in so many other ways. Butch is bumping the wall next to us. Does that a lot. Disturbed? Yes, I think. Poor Butch. Troubled dreams.

A great while ago a lady called me facile. A facile talent. It still disturbs me. Nothing is easy. And my work is deceptively simple looking. They never know. Common complaint. They never *do* know.

I used to have trouble sleeping. Then I went into that drinkingalot phase and Louise told me I snored. Hate the thought of that. Snoring. Porcine. My father snored.

When I went to see Mother the other day she told me that she'd had a ghastly dream about Butch, when he was younger. He was slipping into a giant mud-hole; slipping away from her. Awoke screaming. Tears. It frightened her. I could watch her while I was there, musing on it.

I used to be able to recall every dream I'd had the next morning. Now not at all. There was the dream of being on magic shoes so that each time I jumped I got higher and higher. And the one of the big black man chasing me. Huge flashing white teeth. I shiver even now. Is this why I'm still afraid of black people? A black bumped into me on the train yesterday and I instantly drew back. He sensed it. Smiled knowingly. God. How weak.

I could eat something. What? There's that cake. Peanut butter sandwich with lots of mayonnaise. If only. My eyes began to close a minute ago.

I know. I'll go listen to records. Brahms. Yes. Or *Dover Beach*. Listened to that last night. Liked it. Brahms. *Alto Rhapsody*. Yes. That.

It won't wake them. Just background for their dreams, the lucky bastards.

It's gotten to the place where it's all a big dream, anyway. We're just a lot of fishes swimming through skim milk.

8. Why I Like Sleep, *by Nancy Ragusa*

The good thing about sleep is you can dream.

Once I prayed to the Virgin to make me Queen Elizabeth #1 and he did.

They wore pretty clothes and talked funny.

It was nice back then.

I've had other dreams, but not as good as that. Once my friend Angela made a mud-pie and ate it. The End.

9. *Letters from Hungary*

Last night he came into my room again. He thought I didn't see him, but I did.

He stood at the foot of the bed, examining me. I deliberately tucked my pale white throat beneath the comforter, so he could not examine *it*. After a while, he rustled away. I saw the tip of his cloak as he closed the door.

The nights are cold here. Or did I write you that?

10. *Breakfast*

Look to this day, for it is life, thought Elizabeth Madison Scott, as she drew back the draperies and let in the morning sun. The peonies were in bud and an inquisitive catbird was on a branch near the window, examining Elizabeth Madison Scott, as though through *pince-nez. You sweet thing,* thought Elizabeth Madison Scott, bustling off to the kitchen. She fixed the grapefruit, poured Cornflakes into bowls, set out milk and sugar and heated up the coffee. She could hear her mother stirring upstairs. The tap of her silver-headed cane echoed through the halls. She was coming down.

Quickly Elizabeth Madison Scott ran out into the garden, twisted a rose from a bush and, speeding back to the yellow kitchen, plunged it into a small crystal vial, which she put near her mother's place.

The cane tapped down the back hall. Her mother appeared, grimly determined.

"Good morning, Mother," said Elizabeth Madison

WILLIAM BEESON lives on the outskirts of Philadelphia and is co-author (with his wife, Walton) of The Recession Cookbook—*a venture whose future looks more and more promising.*

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Scott. "Isn't this a *heaven* day? Makes one feel new again!"

Her mother, grumbling, shuffled forward to the table. Elizabeth Madison Scott pushed her in.

11. *Accident*

It was midnight.

It was a weekend.

And I needed cash. So I did like they said and drove down to my Banking Unlimited Money Machine and stuck in my card and dialed 5-0-0-0 and it ate me up.

12. *Ruminations of an Owl from East Hartford*

Just finished a tough mouse.

Yesterday was slim pickings, too. Used to love shrew, but they're harder and harder to come by.

My woman visited cousins in Revere, Mass last month. Came back all set up. They eat well up there. Function in her honor and they all brought something for the larder.

Here comes that raccoon with a frog.

Smartass. □

JACK MARSHALL

HOLD, OPEN, LOOK

The waiting tracks of gone birds
raise their hands.
I have no wheels, am no stationwagon,
cannot carry your sweat on my back,
nor unroll what I mean
into a sleeping bag.

In grass the color of clouds
hangs the junk of speeding
fame: a slug limed on a brick.
Next to it, speech—the thinnest muscle
having to lift weights.
Fine as an eye of honey
in the daily swill,
we took it for hunger,
we took it for meat.
Now it comes chewing, billowy lion head
of fog tossing over the hill, chewing
itself shapeless—lips, nose, feet.

Who is that angel in white sneakers
you saw arriving on the playing fields of paradise?
Not me.
Each of us is many
infants made from the holes of sponges.
O be buttoned safely
into that soaked home's pure porous drift . . . .
Like a root-hand in a new skin,
hold, open, look.

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THOMAS JOHNSON

SWEARING BY OUR SEPARATE SKINS

We heard day lowered.
A plush curtain.

Blue rope
Unwound
Fist over fist

On the winch
Of the cicada's churr.

Near where we stood:

A shattered wall of
Hand-piled
Stone

Like lead
Sewn into a hem
For weight

To hold a pleat
In that

Theatre
On which the eyelid
Falling

Swims toward self

Closes and
Closes.

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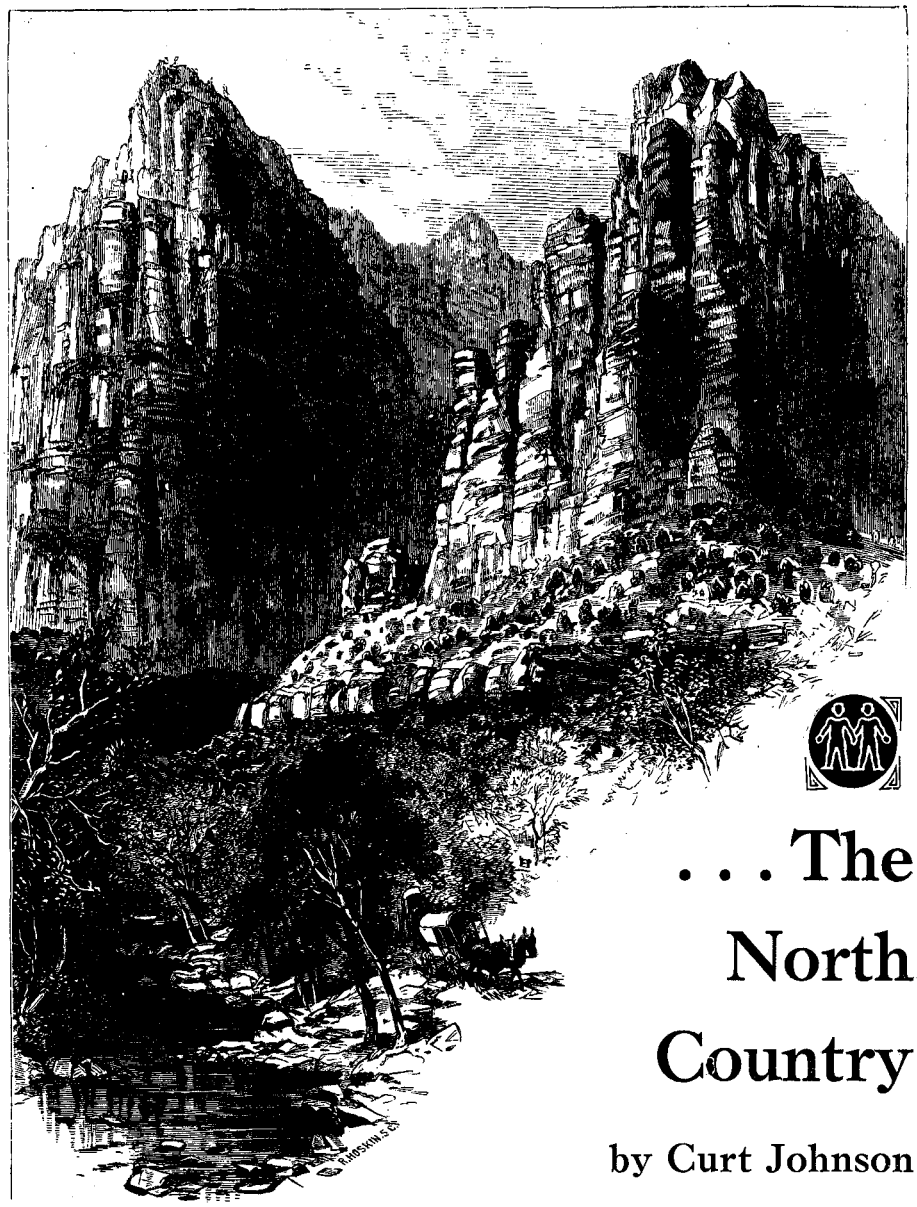
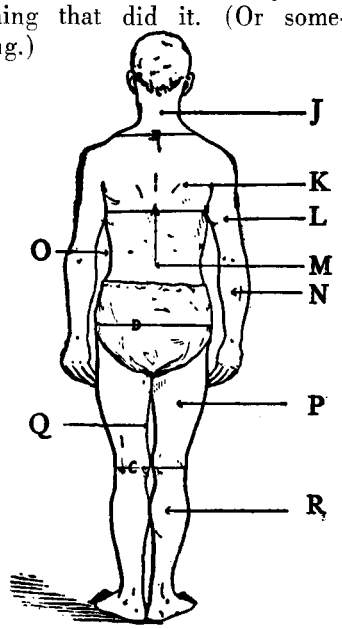


. . . The North Country

by Curt Johnson

The North Country is a *special* country. That is, some of the beer here is *pure*-brewed (and also *double*-brewed) and has a "natural kind of completeness." It is for this reason, we are told (by ad agency, old-style copywriters) that the region is called "God's country." Other than that, the North Country is mainly the northern tier of Midwestern states (which comprise the "heart land of the U.S."—as old-timey historians have it). You *could* call the NC the "Third Coast" if you wanted to . . . , but we might as well call it the "North Country," since that's the title of this "picto-essay." There were a lot of mountains out here early on (see cliff-glyph at right), but by the time all the later settlers arrived, the mountains had been torn down. Some say by glacial action, but actually it must have been placer-mining that did it. (Or something.)



The earliest North European settlers of the region were sturdy folk (see above), and had to be, getting up as they did at cock's crew and working all day in the fields off one bowl of Wheaties. They produced healthy, wholesome offspring who were as American (or "Amerikin," as *they* pronounce(d) it) as apple pie or Mother's Day. Those are two of them at right, over vanilla malts at Bridgeman's after a shoplifting spree at the "dime" store.

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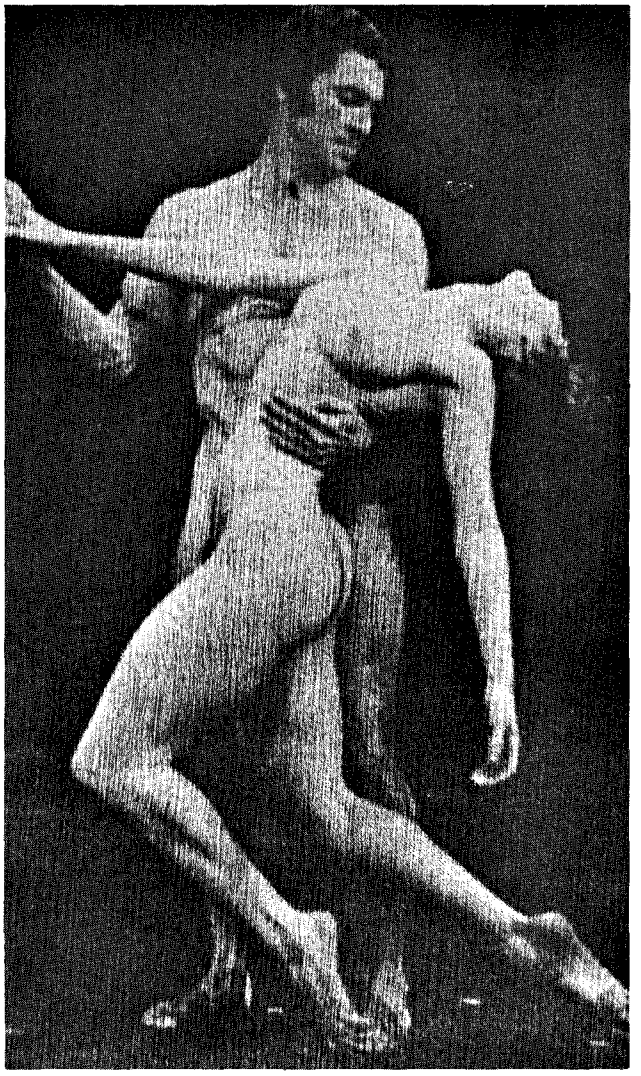
The earliest (North European) settlers came from Scandinavia, mostly. The land (here) was so full of rocks and lakes and thistles and such it reminded them of home, no doubt. (That's one of them above. A Valkyrie.)



They killed the wild animals and hooked the poor fish and plowed the stony ground and so forth, but it turned out that another bunch of people—who had been doing something vaguely similar for Lord knows how long—objected. However, the other (older) bunch were only Indians (and not "Negroes" as some maintain today—there never have been *any* "Blacks" in the North Country), so the problem was easily solved . . . . That is, like this: In 1846 (for example) a whole town of 30,000 Mormons left their homes in Nauvoo (North Country), Illinois, to trekle West. In response, as the Ill. Div. of Tourism puts it, "to much the same sort of pressure (that inspired a parallel exodus) of early Indian tribes." (What this means in Amerikin is that the Indians'—and the Mormons'—neighbors so feared them that murder was in the offing. Quite a few Indians *were* offed, actually.)

All this (regrettable *but* inevitable, do you see?) action was necessary to the rape of a new land—God's country, a heartland place. (If you're wondering about the arrows sticking out of that fellow above, lots of times the various Injun tribes would cut on each other, especially after the Lieflanders started paying them to.) (If you're wondering about ending that last sentence with a preposition, yup: mostly that's something up with which I don't put . . . over the fence some hay.) Anyway, the Scandinavians who took over the NC used to sauna, for example, and then run outside into the snow and flog each other with birchery and pass out. The couple on the left just got done doing that. (They're either Scandies, or Krauts after too much old-style and wurst—same end result.) Even so, though, most everyone did a lot of dog work and made money—most of which went back to mortgage-holders in the effete East.

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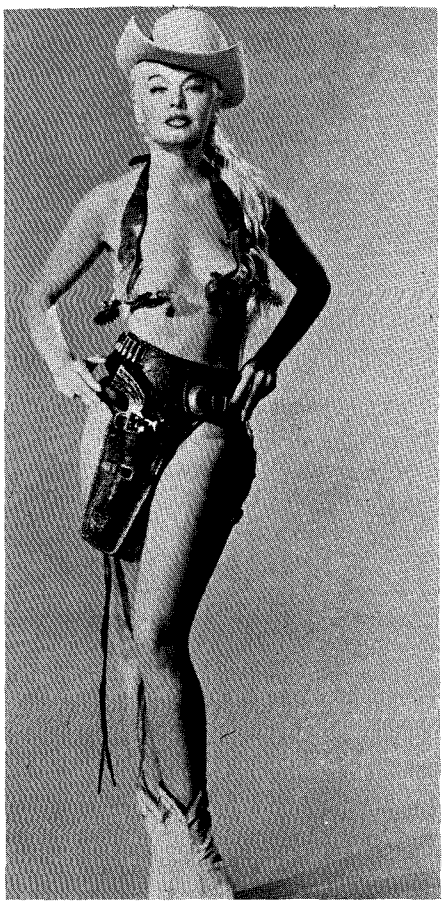
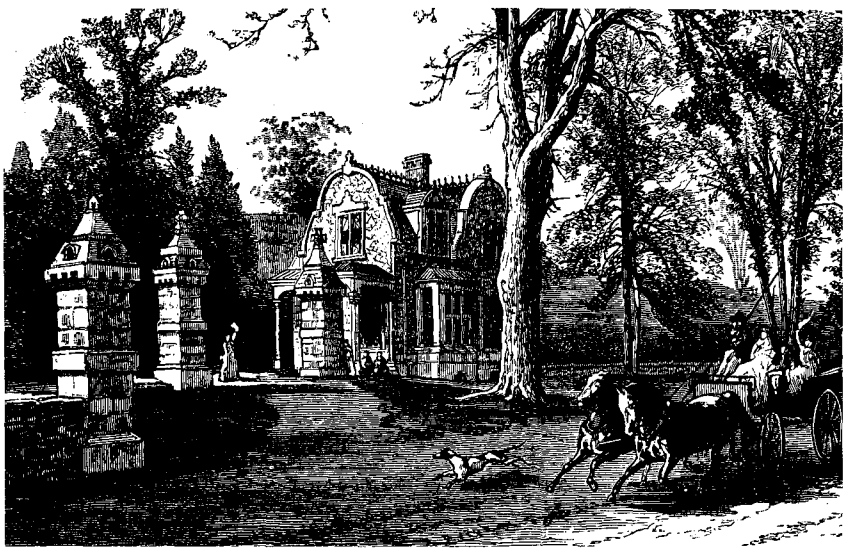


So dangerous was the frontier (in those pre-Turner days) that even the NC's lissome valkyries had to tote sidearms to protect themselves (and theirs—see at left). But the lumber got logged (above) and eventually (in a surprisingly short time, incidentally) a lot of real nice homes got built (below). Not for everybody, of course, but at least for those of them who worked hard, lived decent Christian lives, or (better yet) had money to loan . . . . Which may sound like a pejorative (*Scand* hole-in-the-ground) statement, but which is the way it worked out (always) in the Amerikin way (courtesy J. J. Astor, or you name it).



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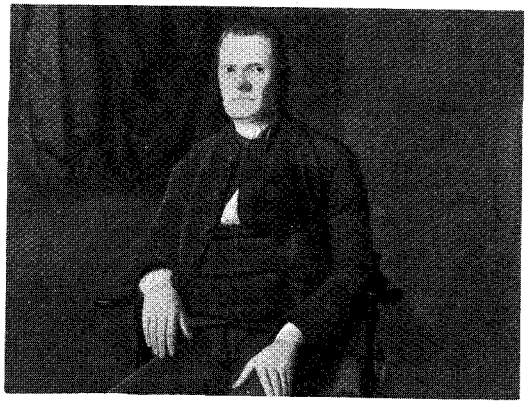

Which is not to say that in the fullness of time a decent domestic life (left) was not established, and overseen by good sound husbandmen (above), with all singing on Sunday hymns that never ended thus: "For He died for de whole roun' worl'—Chilleren, He died for de whole roun' worl'." . . . Which satisfied many for many years on all de sunnybrook farms.

Even so, there were malcontents. (Incidentally, that's a *city* worker at left. He's depressed because his job does not *fulfill* his potentiality as a human bean.) And it came to pass that after a couple of hundred years the malcontents began to "bitch" (a male chauvinist term much in vogue in the NC). The cartoon above summarizes these "bitches"—of which there would have been none if everyone had had money to loan. As it was, however . . . well, you know.

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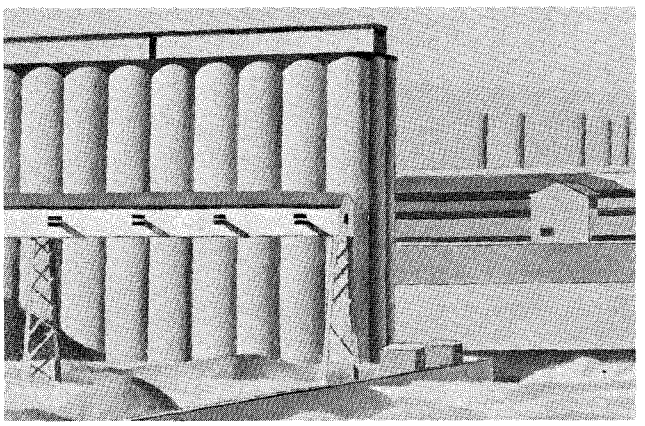
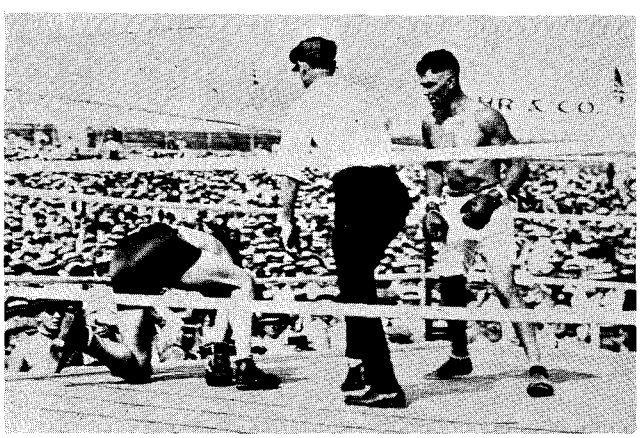
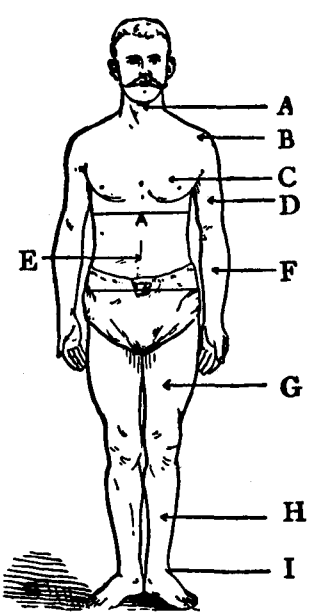


Now you'll have to look at the photos above (one of which is a painting by Sheeler—top right) and infer what you will, on your own. Historical picto-essays are not supposed to draw conclusions but (rather) simply set forth the facts. If I were to contrast the various aspects of NC life being exhibited (as at a County Fair, so to say), that would be to cheat. Suffice to say that not *everyone* led a life of tearoses (or beer and skictuals) in the North Country all those many years between the founding of our great country and now, and yet people survived. (Which they always have, so far.) Some of them (the wealthy) played games, but so did some of the rest (the vast majority). And some of them worked their tails off (as male choads have it in God's country). The rest enjoyed themselves as their incomes permitted. And . . .?



And everybody was still a hardworking, cheerful (or morose) person, though spectator sports had by now replaced sauna and sauerkraut for all the men of the North Countree. (Because their bodies had deteriorated over the years—see diagram at right, particularly points E, F, H, and I, or any of the others.)



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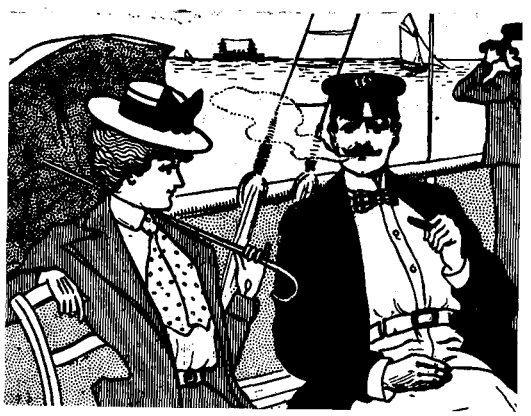
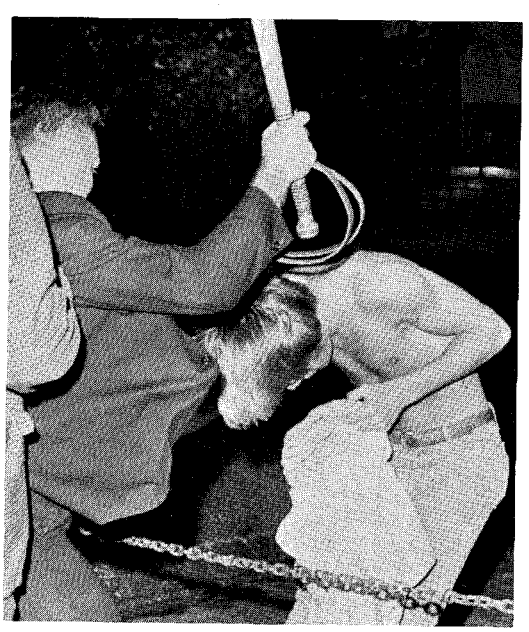
Because then we had the "Great Depression" (as Hoobert Heever of West Branch learned to call it). And (all of us) elected FDR to fix things up (over the fence some hay), but nothing seemed to help and so . . .

. . . during the Great Depression there were a lot of holdups of banks and such, even though there were still beds to make, tables to lay, dishes to wash, etc.

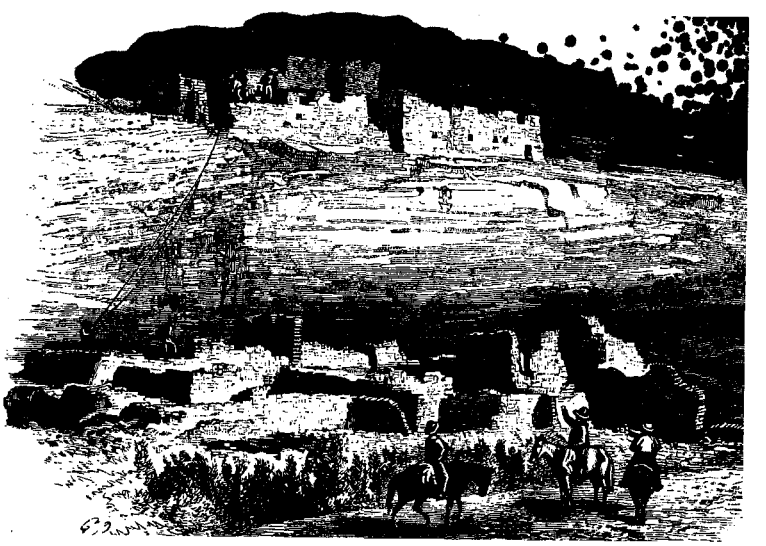
Fortunately a Great War came along and solved the Great Depression.





Today, however, many settlers are moving from NC cities because of black Eastern clouds . . . knowing in their hearts that there is still virgin land in the West. Isn't there? □

Which solution has stood all of us (survivors) in purty good stead (as we say out here—in the NC) ever since (so far), and is of course in strict accordance with the traditional Amerikin release of "pressure."



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Don Mager

Basket Shop

The wicker shop
guards one end
of its narrow
street, which
squeezes past
a square flint church
into traffic
at the other.
Sunlight is scarcely
more than dry puddles of white
on the pavement yet,
and already
the shop spills
baskets, chairs,
hampers, mats—
golden and flaxen.
One expects this street
of some Latin city
where children dart
from the alleys
barefoot,
one face
invariably
streaked with tears.
One expects
a cat asleep
on his back
in its window,
recklessly unfolded,
legs upright
against the glass.
But the glass here
does not restrain
some pungency
about to burst
on the street.
Like bakery shops
or shoe-repairs.
And the children here
carry books
and walk in shoes.

The windows in the dormers
above the shops
are open
an inch at each top.
To air night's smells.
The breakfast tables
are swept of crumbs.
The curtains
all slung back.
And yet
one suspects
a lamp's small island
fixed all night
to vigil out
a stubbling sleeplessness
streaked
across some face there.
And his voyage
never spans
even
the closest shadow
lapping that small light,
nor can outwit
the church's flint
and hourly
bells.

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Phang Song

A Story by Stephen Minot

George Phang Song was up an hour before dawn to wash and wax the car. He wanted it spotless for his day off. It was a cream-colored Anglia, the latest in his father's fleet of four identical taxis. Although it wasn't always easy being a member of Jamaica's Chinese minority — the only non-black family in town —, George found consolation in that fleet of cabs. The family also owned all three filling stations and the town's only supermarket, but it was driving taxis that gave him a sense of pride. Winding through the endless series of hairpin curves that led across island to Kingston, he could forget everything but his own skill and his good fortune to be driving such a car. He was always master when he was at the wheel.

As soon as a section of wax was dry he buffed it with short, quick strokes, working it to a gleam under the two spotlights he had mounted high in the tulip tree next to the garage. It was April and the air was heavy with the odor of lemon blossoms. He had mixed feelings about that smell; it meant the end of the tourist months and the beginning of the slack season. He would have time to relax — like this vacation-day just beginning — but he would also miss the pressure of work.

He heard easy-going steps and soft singing from the street and looked out beyond the circle of light. It was Hastings Compton and his woman. They were ambling back from an all-night bar — a back yard affair — two miles out of town. Hastings' white shirt glistened between the black of his pants and of his massive face.

"Hey, li'l George!" Hastings sang out. They always called George "little" even though he was nineteen and the same size as his father and even his grandfather. "Is why you up like now, mon? Is you *still* up or juss got?"

"Juss got, mon," George said, slipping into rural Jamaican. "Ride to Dunn' River today. Is plenty doing."

"So's we," Hastings said, swatting his woman's rump and making her whoop. "Plenty doing right here!" and the two of them laughed again. As they wandered down the middle of the road, arms around each other, talking between themselves, it seemed that everything they said struck them both as funny. Were they, George wondered, talking about him or his family? He bore down on the fender, buffing with a sudden, sullen vigor.

There was no need to get angry at Hastings, he told himself. The man had never acted against him or the family. Maybe it was that nickname that was irritating. Of course, they made up names for everyone. That was their way. George's father was never called Mister Phang or even Victor Phang except to his face. In private they all called him Victor *Pence;* and *his* father they called *Th' Poun* by which they meant pound sterling. So with pence and pounds they had their jokes and it was no more than that. And now George at nineteen, already a driver and even thinking about marriage, was being called *Li'l* George by just about everyone — except, of course, for the English and Americans who had no way of knowing. Certainly there was something unpleasant in all these nicknames, but what could you do about it? After all, there were only about twenty members of the family in a parish of several thousands. Sometimes he thought of moving across island to Kingston where three of his uncles and five cousins and their families all did very well — driving Mercedes' and taking their vacations in Puerto Rico and all. But it wouldn't be easy moving from one branch of the family to another. There were differences. Like language. George was tri-lingual, speaking Chinese at home, rural Jamaican to local Negroes, and Oxford English to tourists. But in Kingston he would have to learn Hindi to deal with the Indian merchants, and this would take time. No, he would stick with his own parish and his own clan as his father had.

By nine that morning the car was spotless, filled with gasoline, greased, and running perfectly. And he had Lyn with him. She was of the Chang family and had come across island from Kingston the previous autumn to work in the supermarket. During the winter tourist season George hadn't had time even to talk with her — he driving Americans and English across island until well into the evening and she working at the supermarket cash register or arranging stock twelve to fourteen hours a day. All he knew about her was that she was young, small-boned, and being considered as his future wife.

The trip started slowly. She boarded with his aunt and uncle over the supermarket and the only route from there to the highway was through the center of town. He had thought of picking her up before the street markets opened, but it wouldn't do to wake her at 6:00 on her special day off. So he was forced, as he knew he would be, to move only a few feet at a time through the swarms of shoppers which crowded the car on both sides. He was hot in his white shirt and tie. Here and there he could see an American or Canadian, looking unnaturally pale and hairy in short pants, face hidden under some absurdly inappropriate field-worker's hat, hurrying uneasily from drugstore to liquor store, anxious to get back to his compound along some beach; and occasionally George spotted a fellow Chinese-Jamaican; but except for these few the scene was, like all of his country, dark faced and brightly clothed.

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"This will take a long time," he said to her in Chinese, breaking their silence.

"There is no hurry today," she said. He could hardly hear her voice over the shouting, laughing, horn blowing confusion around them. Was she, he wondered, going to be one of those shy girls who never speak up and never smile?

"It will be cooler on the highway," he said.

"I am not hot," she said.

And indeed she was not. She wore a white sleeveless blouse and white skirt slit on both sides in the usual way, and her long black hair hung down behind as if she were posed for a family photograph.

Ahead of them a field worker was trying to get his mule to back a wagon up onto the sidewalk. He was shouting curses; the crowd gathered, hooting and laughing; a policeman in his British shorts elbowed his way through the crowd and argued, waving his swagger stick, his black face glittering with sweat; automobile horns started rasping the air, sending the mule's ears flat back.

George took a quick look at Lyn. She was sitting very still with her hands in her lap looking straight in front of her. Her skin was so smooth it was as if she had not yet in all her life either frowned or smiled. It was impossible to tell whether she was at that moment angry, bored, or amused. Or just stupid! George felt a shiver of panic run through him.

Once they were out on the main road, the day improved somewhat. The route to Dunn's River followed the coast and the air was cooler. Even when the road turned inland, there were palms or tulip trees for shade. He enjoyed driving — not just getting there but the art of cornering, passing, up– and down-shifting. He wondered if she noticed that he was good at it, but there was no way of telling. Her face showed him nothing.

"Do you like driving?" he said after a particularly long silence.

"Yes. Like this. But not across island."

"No? I cross the island almost every day. I can do it in three hours each way. Sometimes I have made two trips in one day."

"I don't like it," she said softly. "The mountains . . . ." She would not finish the sentence. But he took some satisfaction in the fact that she had at least expressed an opinion. He knew that of course no woman should have too many opinions — in politics, for example —; but without her expressing *something* how would he ever come to know her? It was far easier to talk with American tourists in British English than with this Kingston girl in his own language!

It was almost noon when they reached Dunn's River and the parking lot was already more than half full. He had taken tourists there from time to time, but he had never been able to swim himself. Now he felt uneasy — as if he had no right to play the tourist. But this was absurd; there were far more Jamaicans here than whites.

"May I change here?" she asked as he was getting the picnic basket out.

"Here?" He stared at her in amazement. Did they do that sort of thing in Kingston?

"I have my suit underneath." she said.

He was about to say that there were bath houses down where the river entered the sea and that he could afford them, but she was already unbuttoning her blouse right there in the public parking lot.

He turned his eyes away and busied himself with getting the lunch bag from the trunk of the car. He hoped hopelessly that no one would pass, but already he could hear steps and phrases of a foreign language being spoken behind him. It was a fat East Indian in plaid shorts, cameras and light meters strung across his girth, strolling by with his entire family. The wife, wrapped awkwardly in a sari, was busy herding four children who kept darting about between the parked cars trying to catch lizards. But the father had his eyes on Lyn. His stare was blatant, unrelenting, but expressionless. His head revolved slowly like an enormous searchlight.

Protectively, George watched her also — but from the corner of his eye. She slipped off her blouse and tossed it through the open window of the car. Her bathing suit was the color of beach sand and all one piece. She had small, perfect breasts. He had seen the type in his uncle's copies of *Nue*. It was shocking that the fat Indian should be allowed to stare. Everyone knew that Indians had obscene minds.

The wife spoke to him in their harsh language and the family moved off toward the beach like a flock of goats.

"Come see the upper falls first," George said. "Then we'll go down to the beach."

She did not smile or nod, but he took her silence for agreement. They crossed the parking lot to the edge of the forest where, in a gorge some twenty feet below them, Dunn's River plunged down over rocks. Acually there was no single waterfall but a series of terraces with the water cascading down four or five feet, swirling frothily, and then dropping down the next. The strong sunlight was filtered by the trees — breadfruit, banyan, mulatto ear, akee — and made the whole scene dappled. He had read about the garden of Eden in private school — where they gave him the name "George" —; and although he knew it was only an English fairy tale, it seemed to be based on this very spot.

"We can swim here or take the path down to the beach by the sea," he said.

She didn't answer. He thought at first that she was struck by the look of the whole scene, but then he realized she was watching a pair of bathers. They, a man and a woman, were playing in one of the waist-deep natural pools, laughingly poking each other, tickling, trying to duck each other. Their dark swimming suits made them look naked, root-brown bodies swinging and lurching like dancers against the white curtain of the water-froth behind them.

George felt vaguely uneasy. He wished he hadn't given her a choice.

"There's a shower down below where I like to wash my hair," she said at last, still watching the couple.

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"You've been here? You've been here before?" It was a great disappointment. He wanted her to feel the wonder of the place. "You didn't tell me that."

"You hadn't asked me. I've come here with your cousin, Sue, when the store is closed. Sundays, once in a while."

"How?"

"On the bus. We take the bus. You see, the water in your town will not make suds. Here it comes from the river."

He nodded and they headed back across the parking lot and down, across the main road, to the path to the sea. He paid two shillings for each of them to the big Negro in the ticket booth, and then they headed down the concrete steps. They had to walk single file to make room for others coming up — families, couples, little flocks of children. It was foolish, he decided, for him to have felt uneasy about coming here. It was a Jamaican area. There were very few foreigners. Much more important now was the realization that he was not taking her to any new spot. She had been here — perhaps more times than himself. Conceivably, she might even be older than he; though surely his father would not do that to him. His father was a man to be trusted in every area — particularly this.

When they reached the bath houses he saw that, just as she had said, there was an outside shower. He had never noticed. He put their picnic basket down as she started to wet her hair. He was surprised to see how long it was — half-way to her waist. And it was beautifully black. He left her to her public privacy and changed in the bath house — another threepence.

When he came out he saw that her shower faucet was spring operated and high enough to be almost beyond her reach; so he stood there turning it when she needed water and releasing it when she signaled with a shake of her head. She must have planned on all this, for rolled up in her towel she had some Breck shampoo. She lathered, scrubbed, rinsed, and wrung her hair out in three separate cycles. He watched her twist and bend, keeping the soap out of her eyes. He watched her almost without breathing.

Then — actually a relief — they were running the rest of the way down to the beach. Her hips were tight and her legs long for such a small body. The beach sprung up at him, crowded and noisy, but he managed to find them a spot near where the river plunged down its last terrace and swirled through its channel through the sand into the sea. There they ate, watching others climb up the smooth rocks. It was good having something to watch, for what could you say to a girl like this? He had thought in advance that at least he could tell her what he knew of the area: the length of the river, the origin of its name, the temperature of the tepid water, the date of its discovery, and all. But somehow those were things one said in Oxford English — even less musical than the Jamaican English which itself was bad enough on the ear. They were facts you gave to Americans or English couples or Canadians who somehow expected it, standing there in their touring clothes and their shoes in their hands, looking tired and out of place. He thought of how Lyn looked under the shower and he couldn't believe that she would be interested in the length and average depth of Dunn's River. Besides, she had seen it before. This depressed him. It was hardly fair.

After eating they climbed part way up the falls and tiring of that, walked along the beach. Huge almond trees extended their branches out like arms over this deserted section of rocky beach and in places the cassia trees were in blossom, their fallen petals staining the ground and beach. Occasionally he would lift a branch up for her or extend his hand, helping her over another one, but in no other way could they reach each other.

When he was tired he sat on an enormous branch which extended like a boom parallel with the beach. Obediently she sat beside him. Their combined weight caused it to undulate slightly. They looked out from under a confused clutter of branches and dark leaves to the dazzle of sea beyond.

"My father has four automobiles," he said.

"I know," she said.

There seemed to be very little she did not know. "I am his only son. He has two daughters but only one son." He wanted to tell her how he would have a fleet of cars which would service the entire coast right through to Ocho Rios and if it weren't for his uncle on his mother's side he could even expect some day to have drivers in Montego Bay. And they would call him *Mister* Phang as indeed they should call his father even now.

"So they tell me," she said softly.

He winced. He hadn't meant to echo what his family might have said about him. *They* had offered information as argument; *he* was only telling her because it seemed important. She, having heard all this before, must be taking it as more argument. But how could he explain?

They sat very quietly for a long time.

Surprisingly, when they were finally dressed and back in the car the day was almost over. There was still sunlight, but the parking lot was almost deserted. He had not planned on giving her supper too, but it was almost that time. The only place they could eat a simple meal was called The Miami, a place which specialized in serving American hamburgers and beer to tourists. All the other restaurants were connected with the hotels which had sprung up wherever there was sand.

"Sometimes we go to a place called The Miami," she said, as they left the parking area. "It's on the way home to the right."

He swung left. In the absolute silence his mind shouted What is this? Where are you going? She did not *ask*, she only *reminded*. From where is this anger?

But there was no mistaking that he was furious. No, it was not just her suggestion — perhaps not that at all. Somehow he was losing hold of the entire day. He had been invisible to her — he, Phang Song whose family had been Jamaicans for as many generations as hers and were none the lesser for living on the north coast.

He was driving, for the first time in his life, almost recklessly. The sun set as they passed through small towns,

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horn blasting and, now, headlights blinking. Then, as they turned a sharp corner at the crown of a hill, he saw a glow of lights about a mile ahead. The alarm at his lack of plan now became alarm at the decision he had just made.

The glow of lights became a large building and a neon sign saying "Gold Coast Hotel" and he did not turn until he was almost opposite the driveway. The car skidded on the gravel and as soon as he was in control he glanced at Lyn. In the blue-white glare of neon she could have been carved out of bleached sea coral.

He parked between a Jaguar XK 150 and a huge Chevrolet and pulled his tie up snugly before he got out. Circling his own car at a trot he opened the door for Lyn as if she were one of those Canadian ladies without a husband who would leave word to be picked up again at two in the morning. Together, soundlessly, they headed for the hotel entrance which was guarded by two tall Jamaicans in red jackets and high military boots.

Dinner, too, was for them soundless. There were about fifty diners here on the patio overlooking the dark sea. The waiter, a gaunt Negro in a blue blazer and regimental tie took their orders with a civil "Yes, mon . . . yes, mon"; or was it just a little too curt? In the flickering light — candles on the table and kerosene torches on posts — George looked for some sign of humanity from that waiter. A smile would have helped, or some gentle word of humor — perhaps about this or that on the menu. But "Yes, mon . . . yes, mon" built, block by block, a solid wall. Did he do the same for the whites?

They were half-eating dessert after the half-eaten meal had been taken away when the waiters began snuffing out the torches and moving certain tables. Into the space which was cleared came members of a band with their instruments and amplifiers. By luck George and Lyn found themselves in the front row. It was better now that the waiter had been paid and the lights were focused on the makeshift stage. George almost relaxed. Still, no one came for their drink orders. Would it be necessary to protest? He didn't need a drink, but still . . . .

After much tapping of microphones, there was a roll of drums and the band leader came out. He was a muscular Negro whose voice was such that he would have done better without the microphone. He began with some joke about Canadian politics which everyone but George and Lyn were able to laugh at. Then he did imitations of individuals who, apparently, were on television. George had watched two or three shows in Kingston hotel lobbies but they were mostly about cow herders in America and did not have anyone resembling what this Jamaican was trying to imitate. George glanced at Lyn without turning his head and was relieved to see that she did not understand the imitations either. Their eyes met for a moment like two complete strangers in a crowd who from slight gesture or accent are wondering if they share a language.

Then came the various acts. The leader introduced them and then turned to direct his band. First, a mulatto couple danced, and next a man sang with a voice rather like that of Hastings Compton wandering home with his woman at four in the morning. After him came a Haitian juggler whose sex was uncertain. During these acts the band played the kind of loud dance music you could hear any night on the radio. The group was called The Gold Coast Cannibals and they sounded about as they must have when they were still playing for Jamaican audiences — probably in some back-room all-night bar. But of course now they were stiffer: they did not drink when playing and did not talk with the audience. They held themselves aloof and above like the waiters.

The leader announced that the last act would be a flaming limbo dance but while the performers were preparing themselves he would sing. The title, he said, was "Chinese Boy." His smile swept the audience like the beam from a lighthouse — or had it paused for just a moment at their own table?

George sucked in his breath and held it. The band started with a calypso beat and the leader sang:

"When I met Miranda, she's six months along
I'm so young I don' know better
When the baby come, I learn a new song
Chinee fella, he put milk in my coffee . . ."

Laughter rasped the air like a flock of birds. George felt a heat-rash prick his face and neck. He took another big breath.

"We's dark skin, Miranda and me
But our yella-faced baby's a sight to see
L'il flat nose an' teeny eyes
Chinee fella he put milk in my coffee.
Well, Chinee baby he call me Daddy . . ."

George could not look at Lyn this time but he put his hand lightly on hers. Leaning slightly toward her he said "We do not leave now. We will go only after the Limbo." She did not answer or nod her head but she must have heard because she sat there, motionless, through thirteen verses.

When they were at last out in the parking lot with the cool night air around them and the blue neon light showing their way he cursed himself for bringing her to this, for ruining her entire day with this.

He started to turn the key in the lock when he felt her cool hand on his. "Song," she said — it was the given name used only in the family. "Song, I know now how you drive over those mountains. Even twice in one day."

"I don't understand." He looked at her and saw the neon light glisten along the lower rims of her eyes.

"I would not have gone in there," she said. "Except for your leading the way. And I could not have stayed — except for you. It is a very good thing for us."

"Good?"

"A good day," she said, nodding. "And especially this evening. We have seen each other."

This time she smiled, her face truly happy in spite of tears. And he, knowing only that doubts and uneasiness about her had been seared out of him, placed his palm gently against her cheek with a sense of wonder. Then they drove back through dark roads to the town which was his home. □

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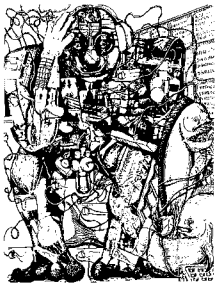

Richard Howard

New Work from Three Poets

In Sepia, by Jon Anderson, Pittsburgh, $2.50
Departures, by Donald Justice, Atheneum, $2.95
Poems 4, by Alan Dugan, Little, Brown—Atlantic, $3

His third book is so much Jon Anderson's best that I rather anxiously scanned the first two again, peering for those marks and signs, those *scars* which might have admonished me what wisdoms, what willing docilities to the separate, indeed the solitary discernment of experience were here to be inflicted. In *Looking for Jonathan* (1968) there is the determination of the initiate, the novice, the squire in the Chapel Perilous, submissive to what he must undergo in order to overcome: "Though we are private, / temporary things / we will, this once, / take milk and bread / and be companions of / a common table. / Then if our animal hearts / desire it, we may / like clear water / over stones, go outward / into a meeting with / the formal shapes of day." The quote survives as poetry without more than the hastiest indication of prosody, aspirations, in every sense, for this poet is not given to strong rhythmic interval—he does not, even in this new book, very structurally sustain his lines, bringing them back, recovering what they let out. Aspiring, then, to utterance, not to verse, he says at the outset, "there are two alternatives, both heartless: memory and forgetfulness." Again he asserts his paradoxical irresponsibility: "Memory, we grow restless, you and I, and accidental . . ." One follows this process of isolation, of *singling out* which is Anderson's sounded note ("deep in my own soup", as he murmurs so easily), in the second book, *Death and Friends* (1970), where the dooms "drop through the line breaks and preciousness of art down to the lake which openly awaited . . ." Disclosure, even revelation are the goal here, as well as the process, and of course the method:

> *So we move toward heaven, man and wife*
> *and nation, not hoping to find it,*
> *but by some violence done to ourselves*
> *(by marriage, by government) to reveal*
> *ourselves . . .*

The poem is to be a wound, barely healed: "not pain, but the aesthetic of pain is learned." And poetry is to regain "the lost freshness for which we hurt ourselves, and write . . ." Landscape, marriage, friendship afford the occasion, expedience determines the form, the "field where I felt recognized"; Jon Anderson is a poet of impersonal illuminations and disclosures, working to get *beyond* or at least far from the personal to what he calls "the light coming between some trees, unmemorized."

But between those first two books where so much is intimated ("clarity, I think I am coming toward you, I bear myself with such indifference") and this one, where so much is no longer intimate but here and now *disclosed*, something has occurred to give Anderson the confidence, even the effrontery of his public sagesse—perhaps it is the mere existence of the first two books; one cannot say. But one cannot gainsay what is here: Anderson has made himself a wisdom-writer, an aphorist of dark corners and difficult intuitions, to whom (if indeed "whom" is the right relative pronoun; not much of the self is left in this "diary of aesthetic change") we resort for the kind of collective assertion about our lives that we expect from the writings we call Scripture. The Scriptural writer is not indeed much taken up by the preciousness of art—he is not much taken up by anything. He is concerned to let himself down as far as his line will reach, and therefore he will sound, occasionally, loose and even limp:

> *This journey into dissolution*
> *as memories become events, become*
> *anticipations,*
> *then dissolve, will empty us of our*
> *complex doubts . . .*

John Clare is the repeatedly evoked precursor here, along with the Rilke, with whose name so many of these drastic sagacities are consonant—here are some samples:

> *. . . Only a great loss could make us feel small enough to begin again . . .*
>
> *. . . I understand by the body's knowledge I will not begin again . . .*
>
> *. . . My grief is that I bear no grief and so I bear myself. I know I live apart.*
>
> *. . . We who have changed, and have no hope of change, must now love the passage of time . . .*

The mad Clare and the eremitic Rilke are suitable choices of harbinger-figures—prophets of the doctrine (it is almost that, a protection of emptiness "until it is large enough" to engorge

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mere life) of a "dark, exclusive joy: the past." But they are too literary to count for much in Anderson's poetics; his is a poetry which discards itself, "a commitment to what you had already lost", and the risk of this entertainment of d e a t h ("death was process . . . leaving you free to change") is the death of poetry itself. Certainly Jon Anderson runs the risk knowingly, even nobly, and in my reading of this book he sounds, as I have said, the note of *singled-out* commemoration which is, by the end of it, a restored relation. The cost, though, is as authentic as the clarity—it is a cost to convention, to keeping, in the axiological sense of that word, so that when the poet says "my mind . . . would not function beyond a certain repetition", we know what he has lost: he has lost the sense of ceremony, of ritual, which makes Scripture more than a cry in the wilderness.

* * *

We live in the past because there is nothing else to live in; our relation to the present is asymptotical—we are forever approaching a point, a moment, a limit which we recognize as what gives us life, yet we can make nothing of it, do nothing with it, until it is out of our hands, literally out of our senses. Asymptotes are what fail to fall together (as *symptoms* do), and it is interesting, in considering Donald Justice's later poetry, to notice that the Greek verb for falling is akin to the Greek verb for flying: here is a poet who perpetuates his powers by taking leave of them, "patient," as he says, "and, if anything, somewhat reluctant to continue." Even the epigraph of the wonderfully titled *Departures* sounds the tonality—calculated, wounded, gorgeous in that it is full of gorges, lapses, holes—which we will hear in the last line of the book, consistent from the "still slowly diminishing echo" to "everything going away in the night again and again."

If everything goes away *again and again*, there must be a time when it comes back—and that is the present, the difficult Now to which Justice keeps making an asymptote, a reconnaissance. His preoccupation is, in every sense, with *tense*, as when he so characteristically observes: "the typewriter will be glad to have become the poem"—the future and the past conjugated in order to reach the Present, Justice's Muse, a goddess to be worshipped in absentia, "the more b e a u t i f u l, especially when suppressed." As we remember from *Night Light*, suppression is a significant way of making room for possibility in this poet's work, though of course it is the possibility of farewells that is thus lodged in the language. "You have begun to vanish . . .", and again, "our cries diminish behind us" —all of these stabs at what Justice calls "the promised absence" are so many "furtive illuminations" of his theme, which is given in one of his most striking titles, "An Elegy Is Preparing Itself", *i.e.*, I am alive.

Life's best means of articulating an advance upon the present is that peculiarly native construction, the g e r u n d i v e phrase, the ultimate asymptote: "my place in line *is evaporating*", Justice observes drily, or again, apostrophizing a star, "that fade and *are fading*, but never entirely fading . . ." In these poems, for all their exactitude and their exactions (Justice is not easy—he is determined about his asymptote: "the address if not the destination"), nothing is either here and now, or everything is there and then. The utterance is suffused, is soaked with process, unable to initiate being, and unable to call a halt ("Is that a scar, or a birthmark?", the 19th question suggests Justice's uncertainty about beginnings and ends). These poems —odes, by title, elegies, fragments, questions, white notes, notebooks, r i d d l e s, variations, homages—are "shaken with premonitions of a time when they will have begun to stop", and indeed such shaking affords them their rhythm, their breath, their aspiration to movement. Death is "still to be escaped from", even as one of Justice's heroines feels life "closing about her now": here is a delicate dialectic between calligraphy ("most beautiful in its erasures") and cancellation ("eventual flame, some final smoke"), where the usual signs attached to remembering and forgetting are reversed; in Justice's poetry now, the positive value is not attached to what is "already falling away, already in memory," but rather to what is not yet experience, "a poem in hiding . . . the unfolding page": it is the "absent flowers abounding" he cultivates, for the actual ones are erased by words, by recall . . . The last two poems in the book, "Absences" and "Presences" trade places with each other over and over again, and we n e v e r know, in these "bleached mirrors", where we stand. It is not indeed a matter of standing, of *instances*, that Donald Justice affords us, but a manner of *ecstasy*, the lunge for the present, the ablation of ontology, the denial of likeness, for as the master whom he so lovingly chides and so challengingly lionizes—as the greatest actuary of them all remarked, "identity is the vanishing point of resemblance." There are many deprecations in this little book, many withdrawals and tergiversations, but what matters is material: some of the most assured, elegant and heartbreaking—not broken, but breaking—verse in our literature so far.

* * *

So many times, as I have had occasion to remark elsewhere, has Alan Dugan in his first three books cried wolf that one can scarcely expect him, here, to lie down with the lamb. Nor does he. No, the cry is raised again, the hue of dispirited accommodation and the cry of grievance, the impounded self banging against its imprisonments, striking "a hammer of images forged by deaths, the idea of death, and cash the savior."

Homo homini lupus, indeed, and though Dugan has impulses of relenting in the case of girls, whisky and fresh air (especially the case of whisky!), they are meager indeed compared to the generalized ferocity which tunes his instrument, which whets his whistle:

I felt an instantaneous tree of ice
invade my nervous system and connect
dreams' dreams to an historical reality.
Thus I expected subsequent atrocities
and woke for whisky and an armed life.

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These new poems, mostly untitled, all brief—to the point of being bitten off, "a sculpture of neglect"—coming seven years after the old ones, are a little less sumptuous in their *ressentiment*, a little more withdrawn in their calculation, their stoniness, precisely. "This petrified obsession, perfect in tautology . . ." is pretty well content, or pretty ill, to inscribe itself, "strict as a meander", on the observed excruciation of it all, the terrible dialogue between public and private speech, the impossibility of the latter and the inadvisability of the former—hence the strange necessity, the compulsion to write these little poems:

The independent subway of the mind
must go beneath the crust and beds
of rivers, lovers, and the dead
to hunt, as end, means, and cause,
the star they say they're flying for . . .

There are such glinting recalls, here and there, of Dugan's old and splendid figure, the phenomenology he has made so wonderfully his own in the first three books, the emblem of the branching artery-system doomed to become antlers, to harden into non-conducting weapons, as here in the "Portrait in the Form of an Extended Conceit", which begins "A coal mine is a hollow tree . . ." and as in that "instantaneous tree of ice" already cited. Here, though, there are few instances of the old recklessness, the old longing for civilities which the speaker cannot afford but—"what have I got to lose except securities?"—obtains anyway, anyhow, in a cloven-hoof-to-mouth music. There is mostly the reminder, the token, the wolf kept on the Capitol in memory of this authentic, this heroic grudgery among us, the life-sentences of a self which recognizes that paranoia is a means, though not the only means, of making the world beyond the wolf's cage *stand and deliver:*

Oh I look out for dangers other than myself,
and rescue by and from the sounds and lights outside. □

If we are not stimulated by triviality . . . let us feast at the table of the gods!

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Don't muddy up the googol.*

*Googol: The largest number of things that has a name. Webster defines it as the number one followed by a hundred zeroes.

There are googols of little creatures squiggling and burrowing, flitting and squishing under the mud, through the swamps and over the sandy marshes. Sea squirts, copepods, lugworm larvae and the babies of little fish. Each with a kind of a brain, each with the breath of life. But their life is ebbing. And as they start to go—you do, too.

You are standing on the threshold of time in as sacred a place as any in the world. It's where the life of the water and the life of the land converge in biological blur. These are the wetlands—the swamps and the mudflats that sometimes smell like rotten eggs. These are the marshes, clogged with weeds, swarming with bugs, teeming with beautiful life. This is where the moon moves the water in shallow ebbs and floods; where the sun pierces down to the ooze and the nutrients flow in a strange and marvelous way. Nowhere else except here in these sopping grounds is there so much life in so much concentration. But the life is dwindling. And as these lands start to go—you do, too.

These squishy, mushy lands are where most of our fish are born, the fish that feed the fish that feed the fish that fill the sea. These narrow strips of estuarine land are where the birds come to rest and nest and feed; and they are tied inexorably to the life support for the raccoons and the bears and the deer a hundred miles away. And to you.

In California, most of the wetlands are already gone. In Florida, they're going fast. Once there were 127 million acres of interior and coastal wetlands. Now forty per cent are gone, the precious specks of life in these treasured lands exchanged for yacht clubs and marinas and industrial growth. As we dredge the bays and fill the marshes and cover the mud with asphalt; as we spray our poisons and scatter our waste and spew oil upon the waters—we destroy forever the great forces of life that began millennia ago.

But now we have gone too far. Because this planet belongs not only to us but to them as well. To the umpteen zillion other things that fly in the sky and roam on the land and swim in the sea and burrow beneath our feet.

Now, especially now, if we will only stop to think—perhaps we will think to stop.

Sierra Club

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